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10. Words Are Hard: A Just for Fun Episode


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For our very first "Just for Fun" episode this month, we played a game of Word Association where...









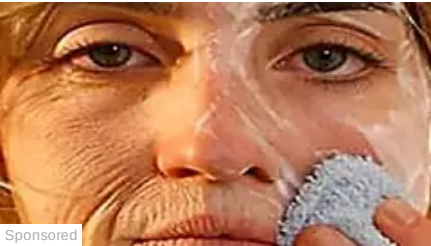
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THE COMPLETE PEANUTS TPB 15

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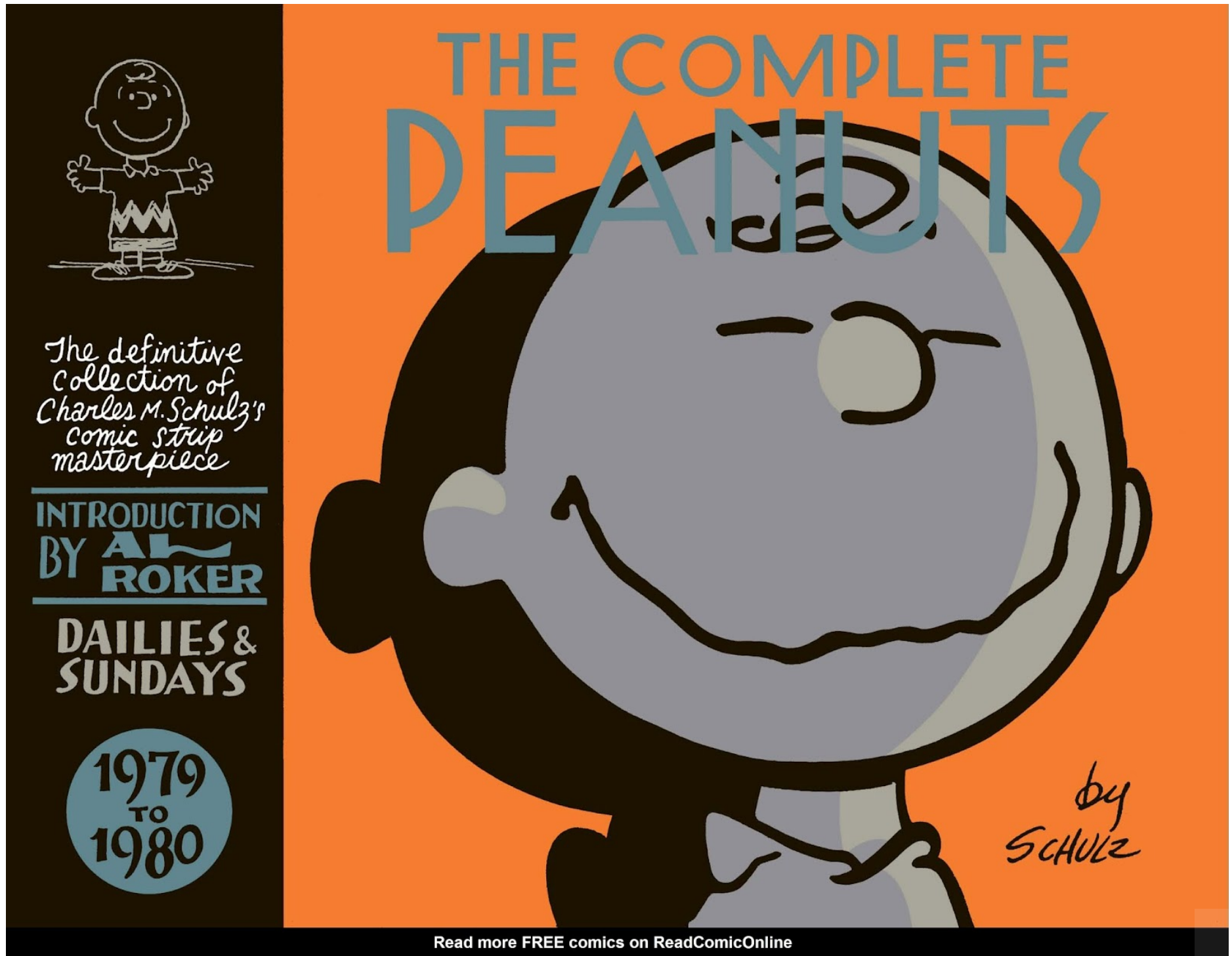
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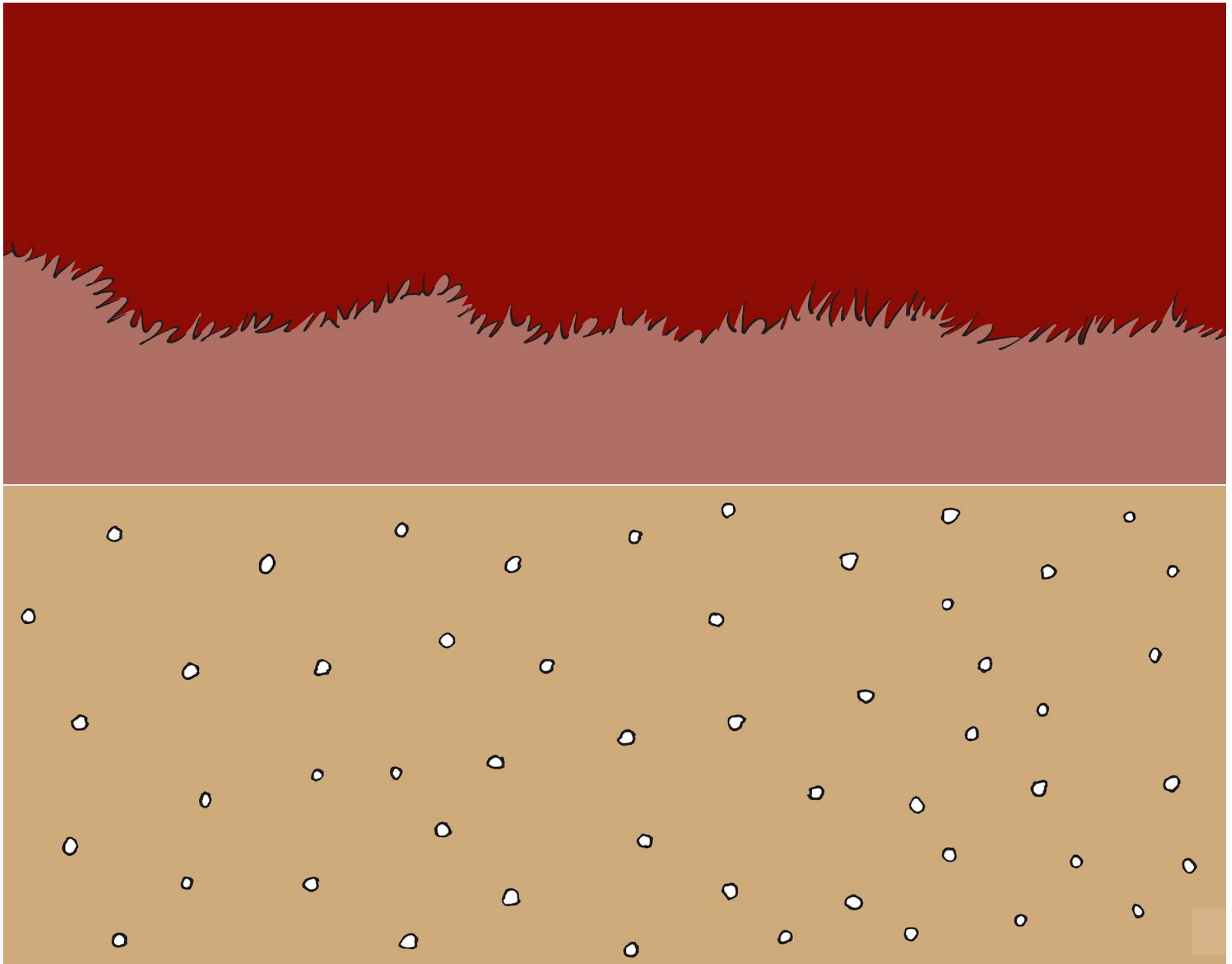
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THE COMPLETE PEANUTS

by Charles M. Schulz

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CHARLES M. SCHULZ

THE COMPLETE PEANUTS

1979 TO 1980



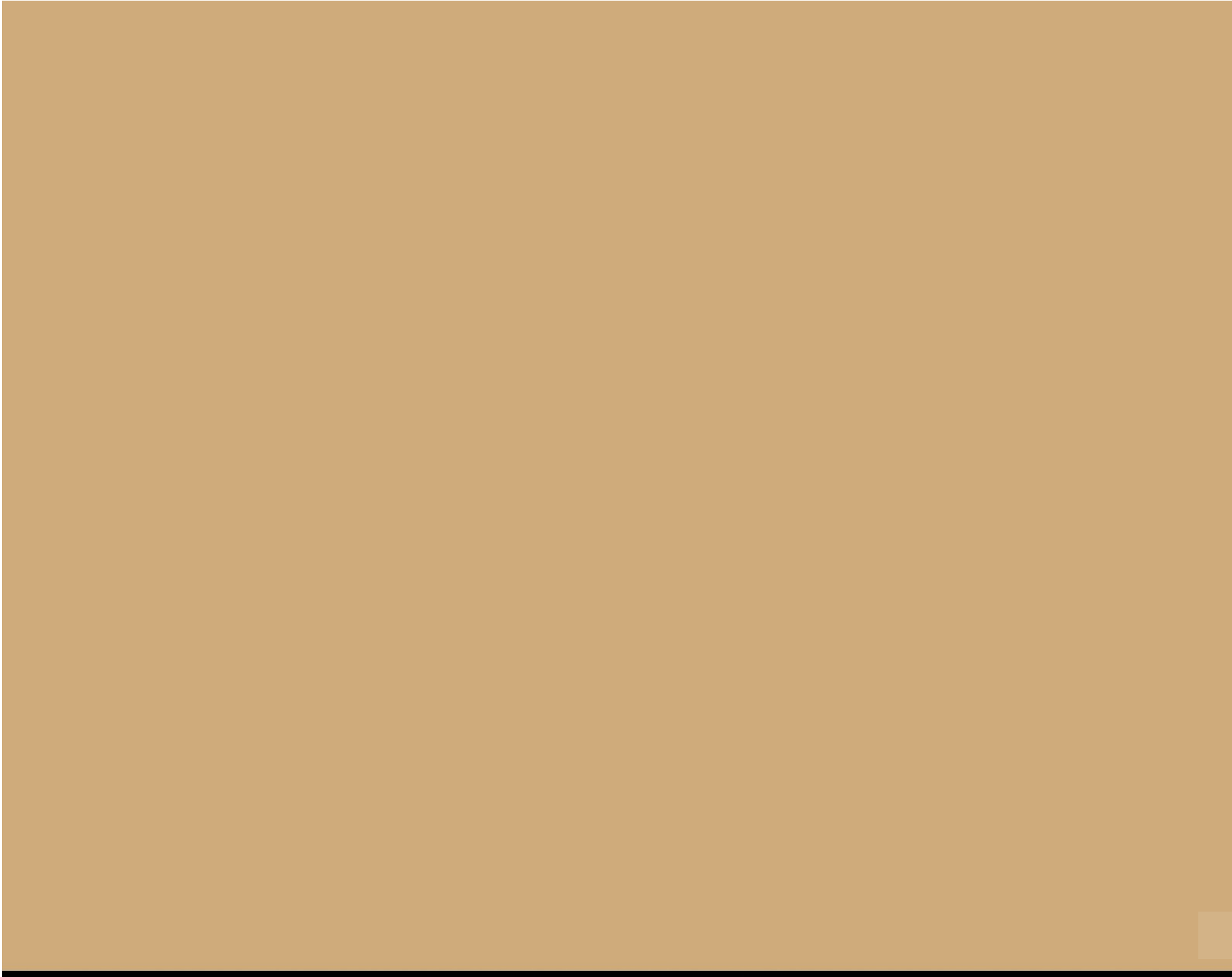
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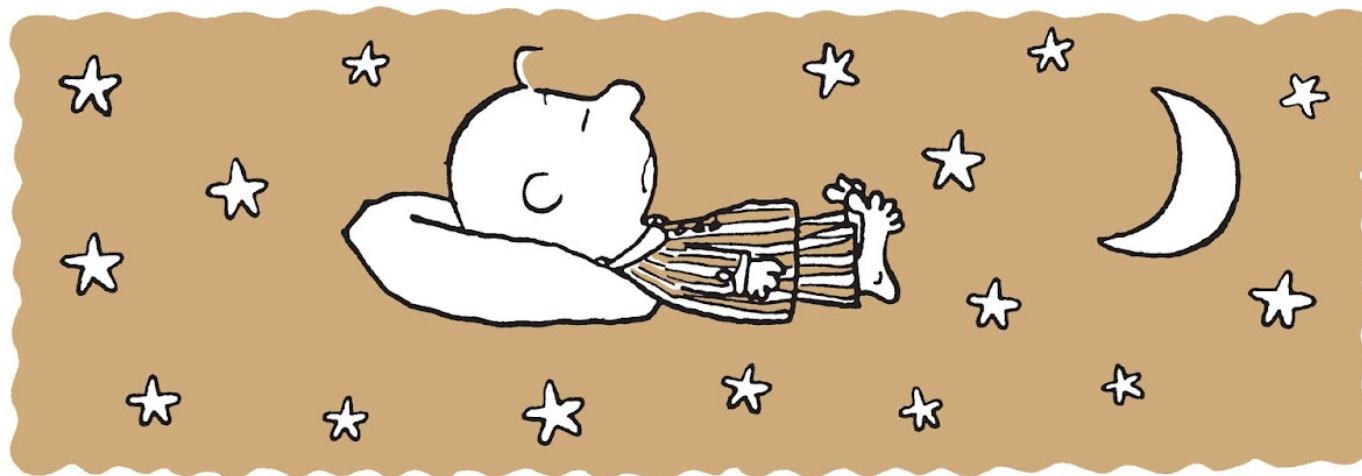


Charles M. Schulz at his drawing board at 1 Snoopy Place, circa 1975. Courtesy of the Schulz Family.





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FOREWORD by **AL ROKER**

It was March of 1963. I was seven years old. We had moved from the Rockaway projects in Brooklyn to a small development in St. Albans, Queens.

My folks had scrimped and saved to buy a home in this working class neighborhood — a neighborhood in “transition”: whites were moving out and African-Americans were moving in. In other words, Archie Bunker was running away, George Jefferson was moving in.

We were families searching for the American dream of home ownership. Black teachers, postal workers, state and city workers all looking

for a decent place to live, good schools, and a well manicured lawn to call their own. A Black bus driver, Al Roker, Sr., and his growing brood of six found that plot of land.

One of the first things my mother, Isabel Roker, did after we moved in was to subscribe to the local paper, *The Long Island Press*. That was the first time I read *Peanuts*. (My dad used to bring home the *Daily News*, but *Peanuts* was not part of the arsenal of comics they used to flatten their rival, the *NY Post*.) No, it wasn't until the *Long Island Press* that I became close personal friends with Linus, Lucy, Snoopy, and of course good ol' Charlie Brown.

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I loved comics. I dreamed of becoming a comic strip artist, or better still, an animator. I drew comics constantly in my spare time, and practiced signing my name so that it would look good. How good could the signature of a seven-year-old look? But to my untrained eye, it was right up there with Walt Disney's.

To a seven-year-old, a lot of the comic strips were either too silly (*Nancy*) or too old (*Mary Worth*, *Brenda Starr*). Some seemed too weird (*Dick Tracy*, *Gasoline Alley*). But *Peanuts* somehow transcended them all.

Even then, I was attracted to the simple yet sophisticated message that *Peanuts* imparted every day. Here were these big-headed children (though in time, their bodies caught up with their overly-inflated noggins), saying things wise beyond their years yet understandable to kids my age.

Like any great comedy — say, Warner Bros. cartoons, or the *Soupy Sales Show* — the humor played to two audiences: kids and their parents. And if you were a kid whose sense of humor skewed upward toward adult, it was like getting let into a secret club. You understood stuff your friends didn't.

It wasn't long before I started clipping each day's *Peanuts* strip from the paper and carefully scotch-taping it to a piece of loose leaf paper. I would put

five strips on a single page, then the Saturday strip and Sunday full-color strip on their own page.

I saved the weekly strips in a binder and added two pages to it every week. I thought that some day these would be valuable. A collection of *Peanuts* comic strips in order! Who would ever think of doing such a thing? I was so ahead of my time.

I remember in the summer of 1964 walking into the St. Albans Public Library and there in the Children's section a Fawcett-Crest collection of

Peanuts comic strips, Charlie Brown and Snoopy. Somebody stole my idea! But wait, there were other collections. These Fawcett people were geniuses... like me. Now I could stop clipping the strips out of newspapers and instead devote my energy to other more worthwhile endeavors — like figuring out who was faster, Superman or the Flash.

In 1968, a young African-American could search high and low through the daily comic strips and you would never find anyone who looked like you. Sure, there was Punjab in *Little Orphan Annie*, but what was he? Black, Indian, Italian with a really bad tan? Who knew. No, no one who looked like me lived in the pages of the funny papers.

And then, Franklin showed up. July 1968. My devotion to *Peanuts* had only grown, but this was a



momentous occasion for me — and cemented my adoration of Charles Schulz. Franklin helped Charlie Brown build a sand castle at the beach. Charlie invited Franklin to visit him later and Franklin took him up on it. Eventually, as we move into the '70s, Franklin is seen in school with Marcie and Peppermint Patty.

For a voracious reader of the daily comics, this was a big deal. Blacks were on TV, in the movies, and on the radio with hit records. But we weren't in the comics. And then, suddenly, we were.

Others would follow Schulz's lead. *Beetle Bailey's* Mort Walker introduced Lt. Jackson Flap, with his afro and cool demeanor, in 1970 — but it was Franklin who blazed a trail.

I had an opportunity to interview Schulz for the 50th anniversary of *Peanuts*. I asked him about Franklin. He said at the time he wasn't making a statement about race relations or felt any pressure to introduce a black kid to Charlie and the gang. It just happened. When I told him how much it had meant to a small black kid growing up, he smiled and said he was glad it did. He talked about how surprised he was at the reaction of Franklin; how some newspapers in the South threatened to pull *Peanuts* from their papers, while others hailed him as a proponent of race relations.



Sparky insisted Franklin was just a character whose time had come. I couldn't agree more. Yet the strip itself is truly timeless. The fact that *Peanuts* still runs in today's newspapers in reprints, eleven years after its creator's death, and seems as fresh as when those strips first ran, is a testament to the genius of Charles Schulz.

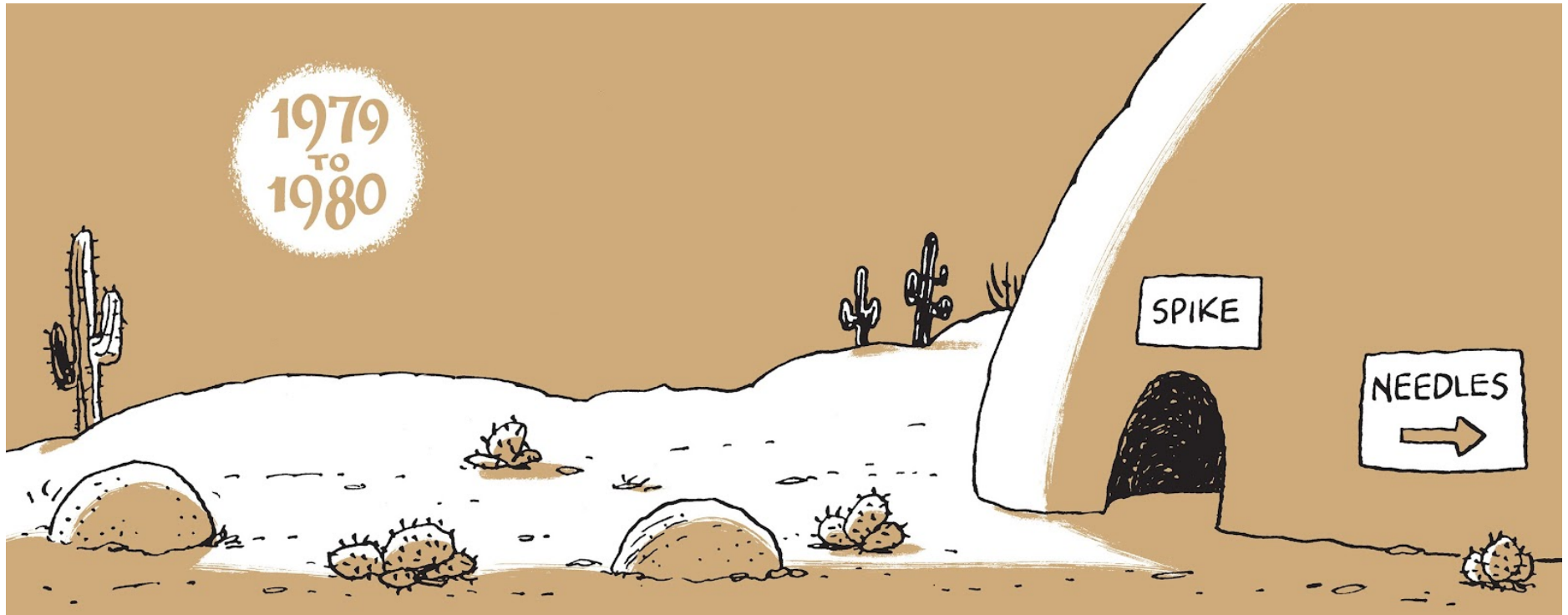
I remember vividly hearing about Sparky's cancer and the profound sadness I felt. Then a week later getting a call from his wife, Jeannie, saying

Sparky wanted to give one more interview before his passing and would I come out to Santa Rosa to do it?

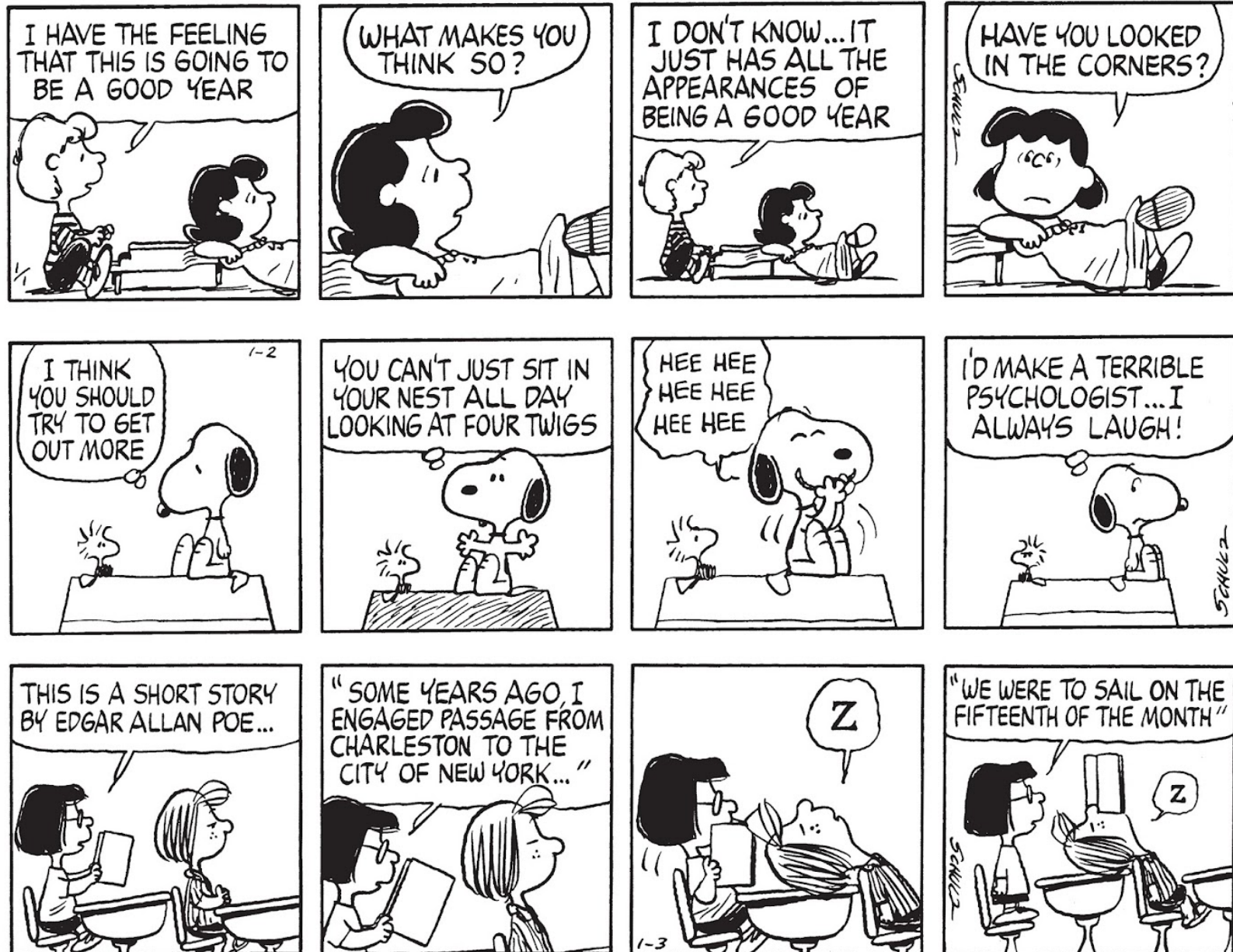
It was one of the hardest interviews I had to do. Speaking to a man whose life work had brought so much joy, yet I was speaking to him as he was about to die.

There was a certain peace about the man, as we talk-

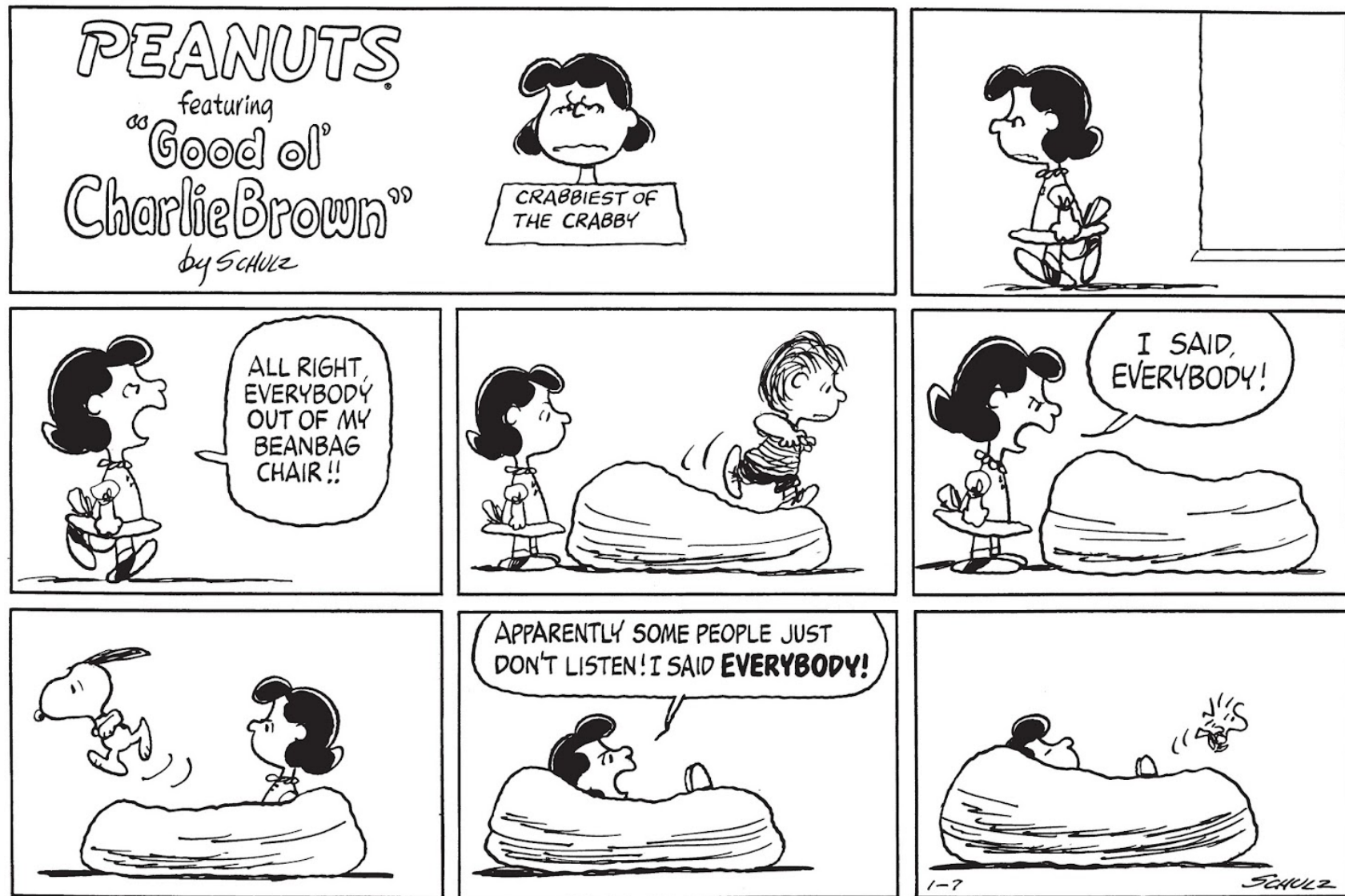
ed only a few feet away from a battered and well-used drawing table where these iconic characters lived and played. So many people took so much away from the daily doings of these "li'l folks," as Sparky originally titled the strip. I was one of them. And I watch as my children discover what I did almost 50 years ago: That you're a good man, Charlie Brown. And all your pals are pretty good, too, day in and day out.



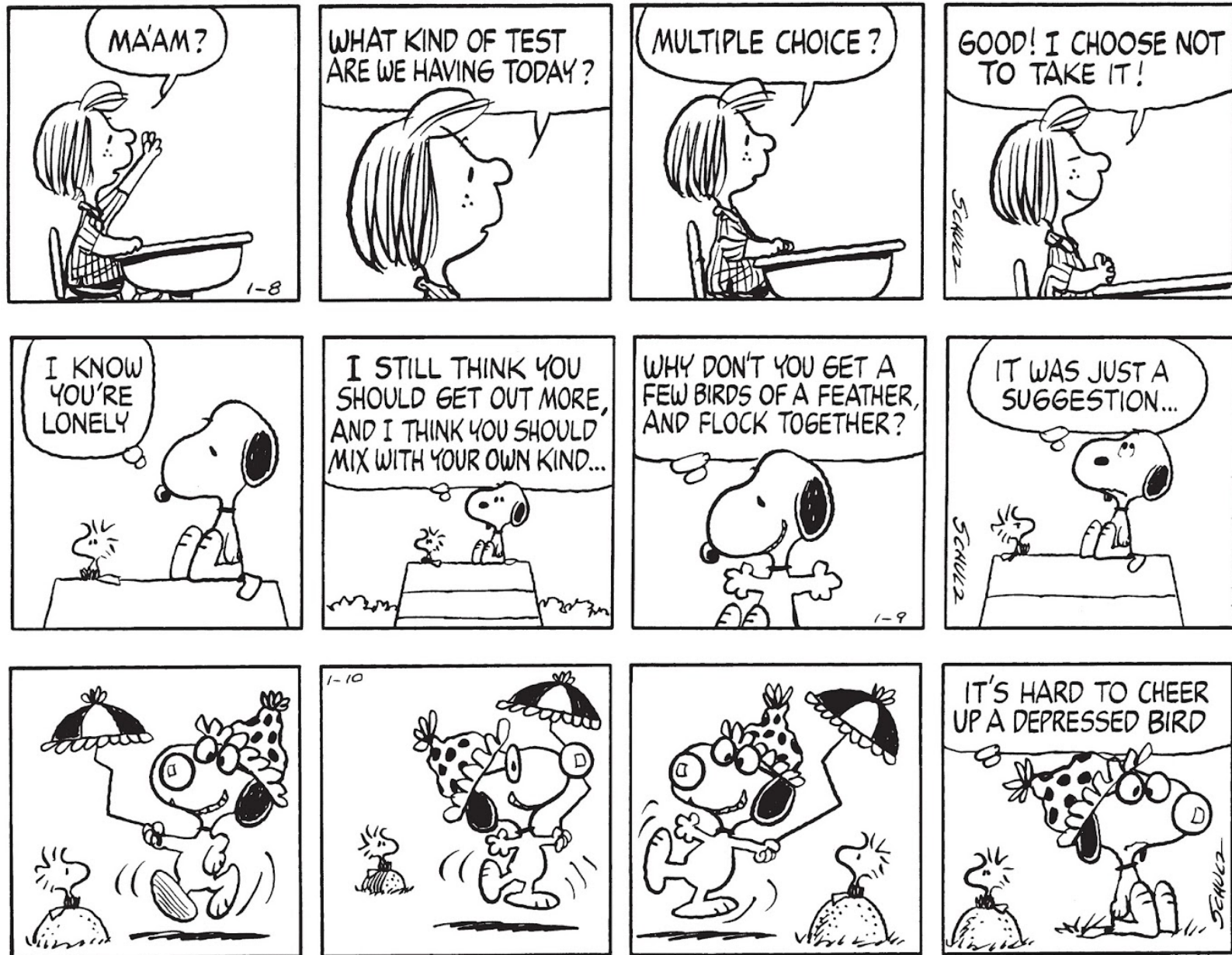








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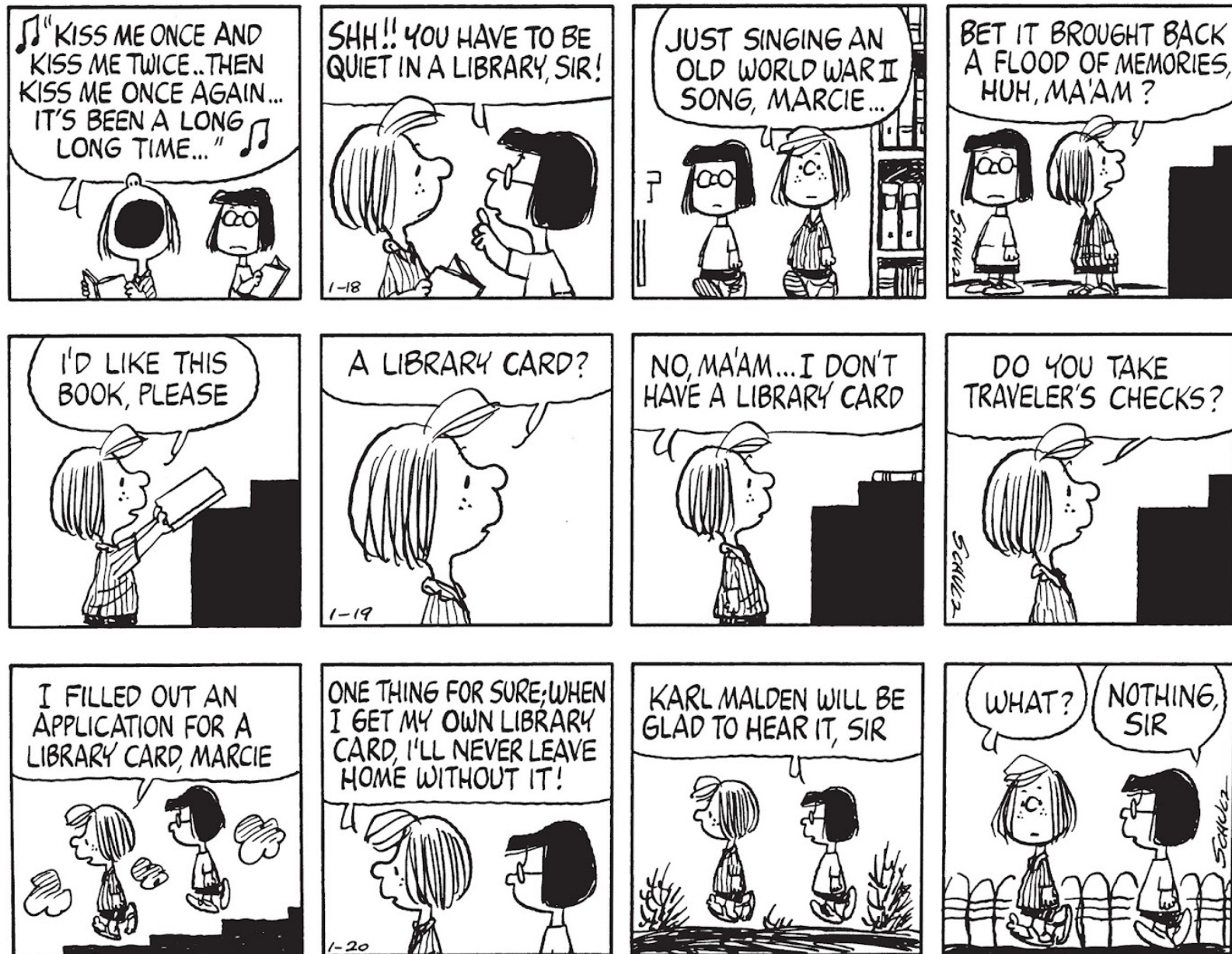


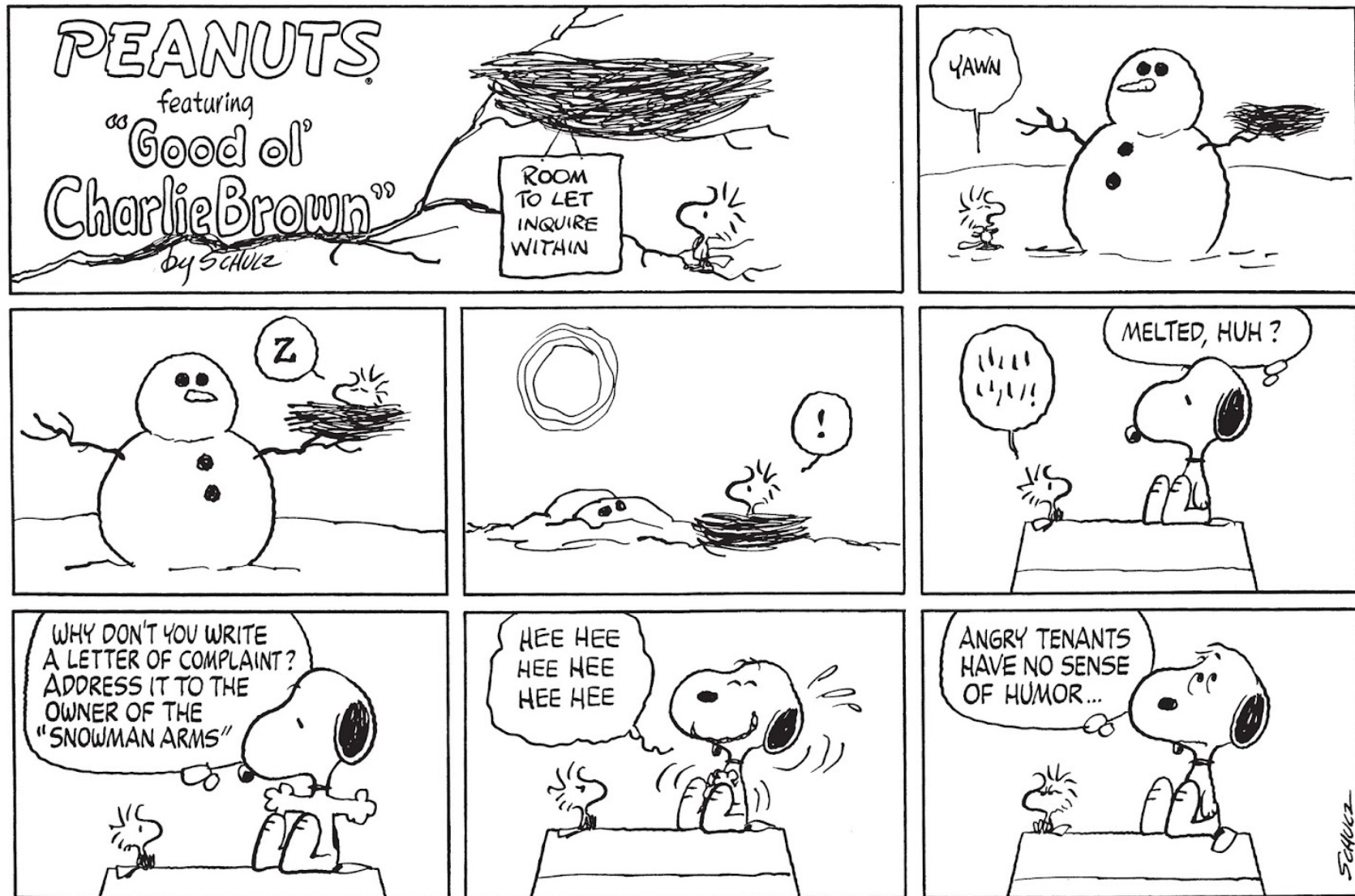


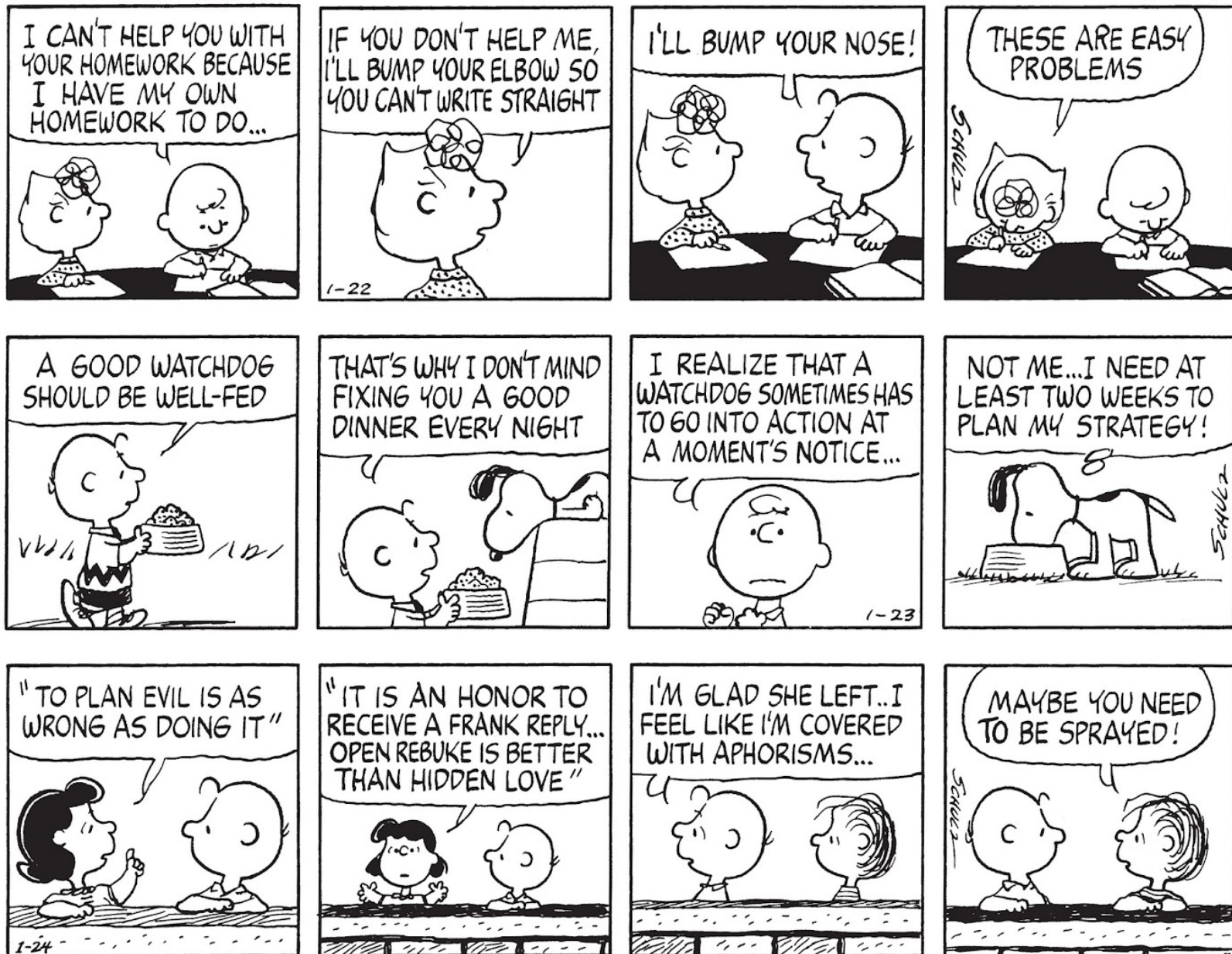
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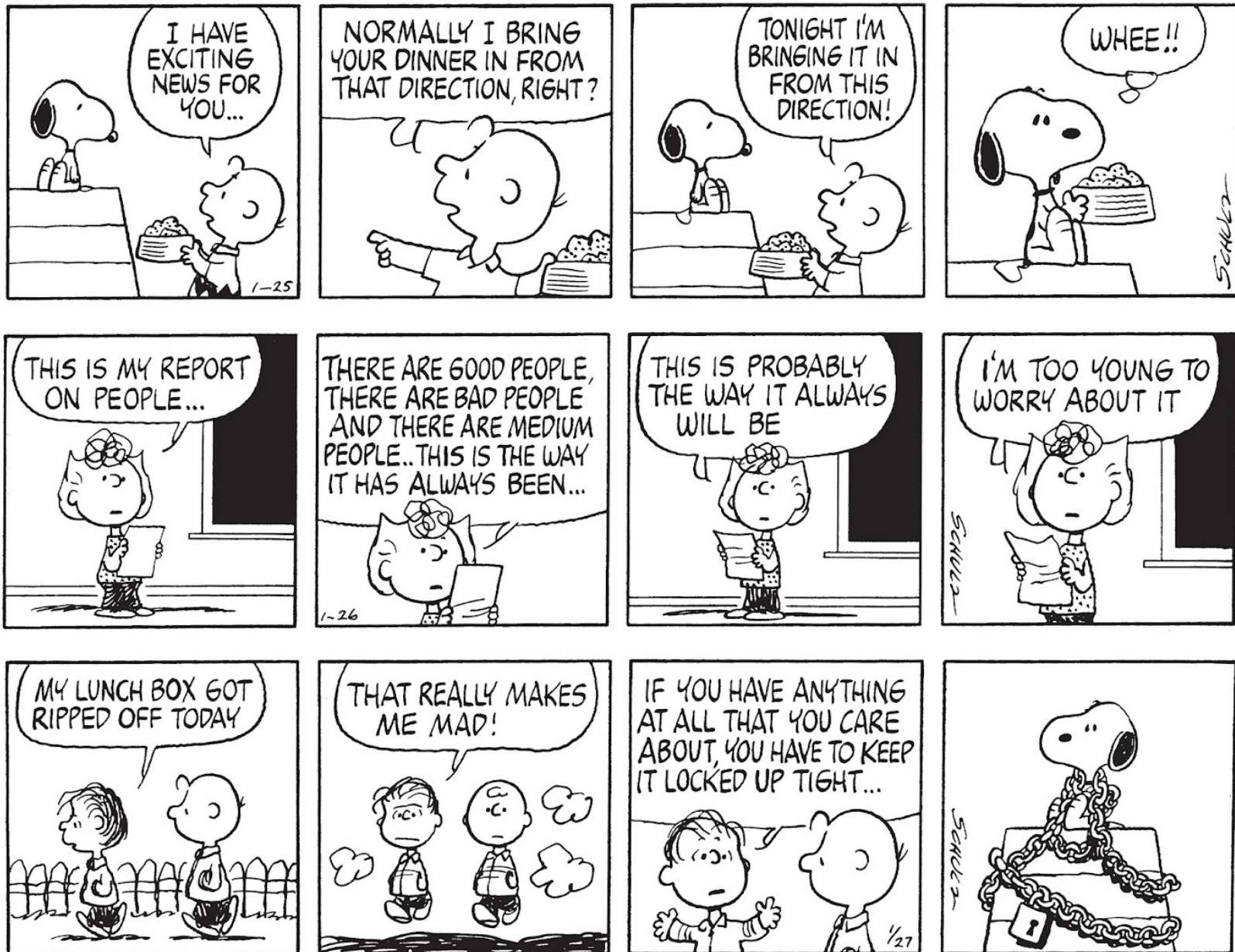


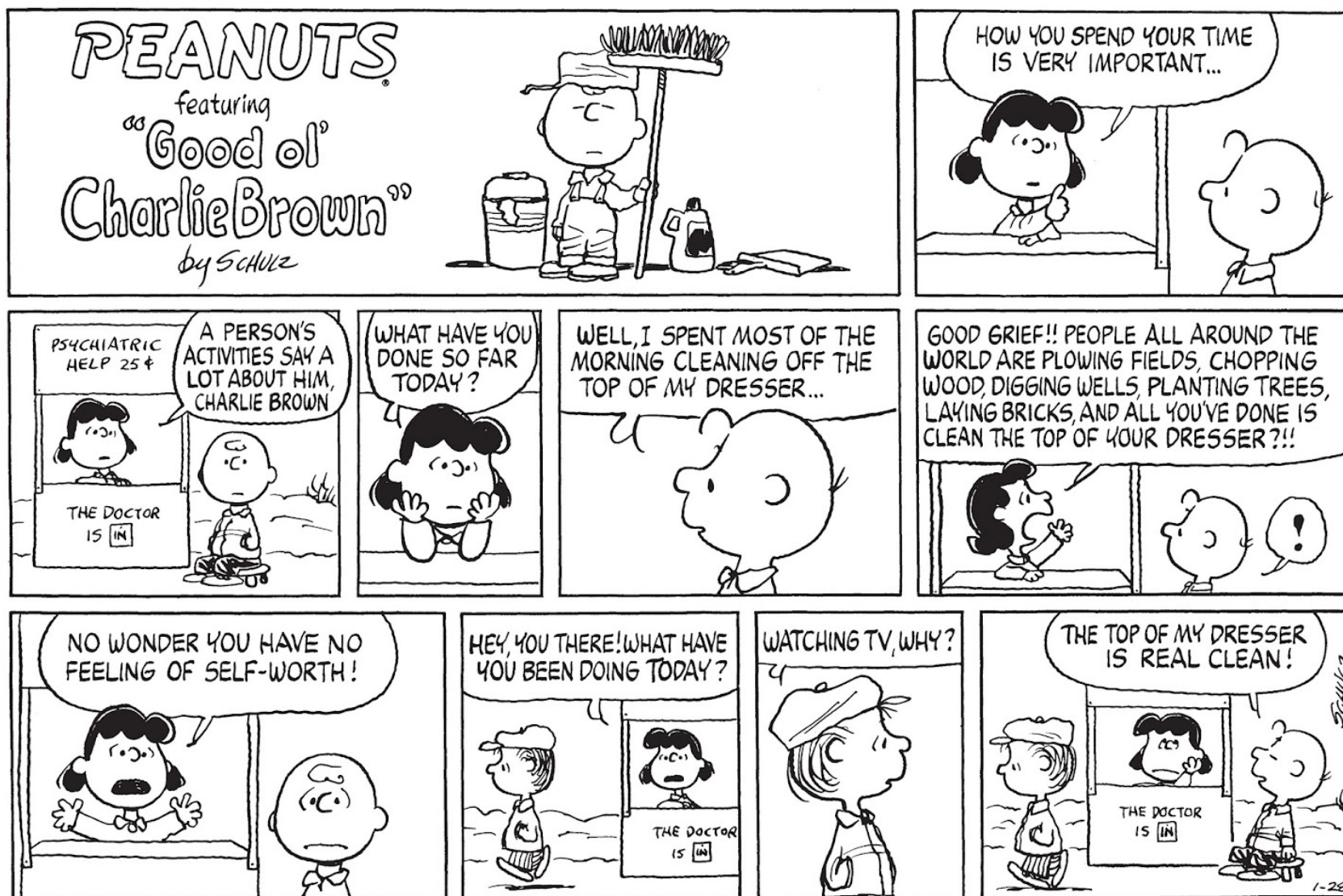


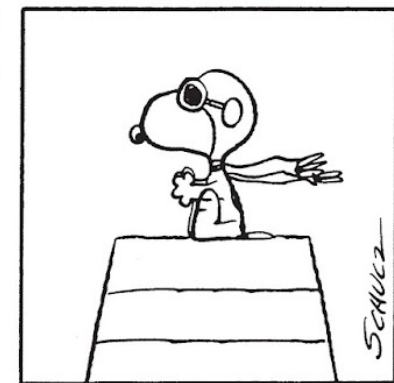




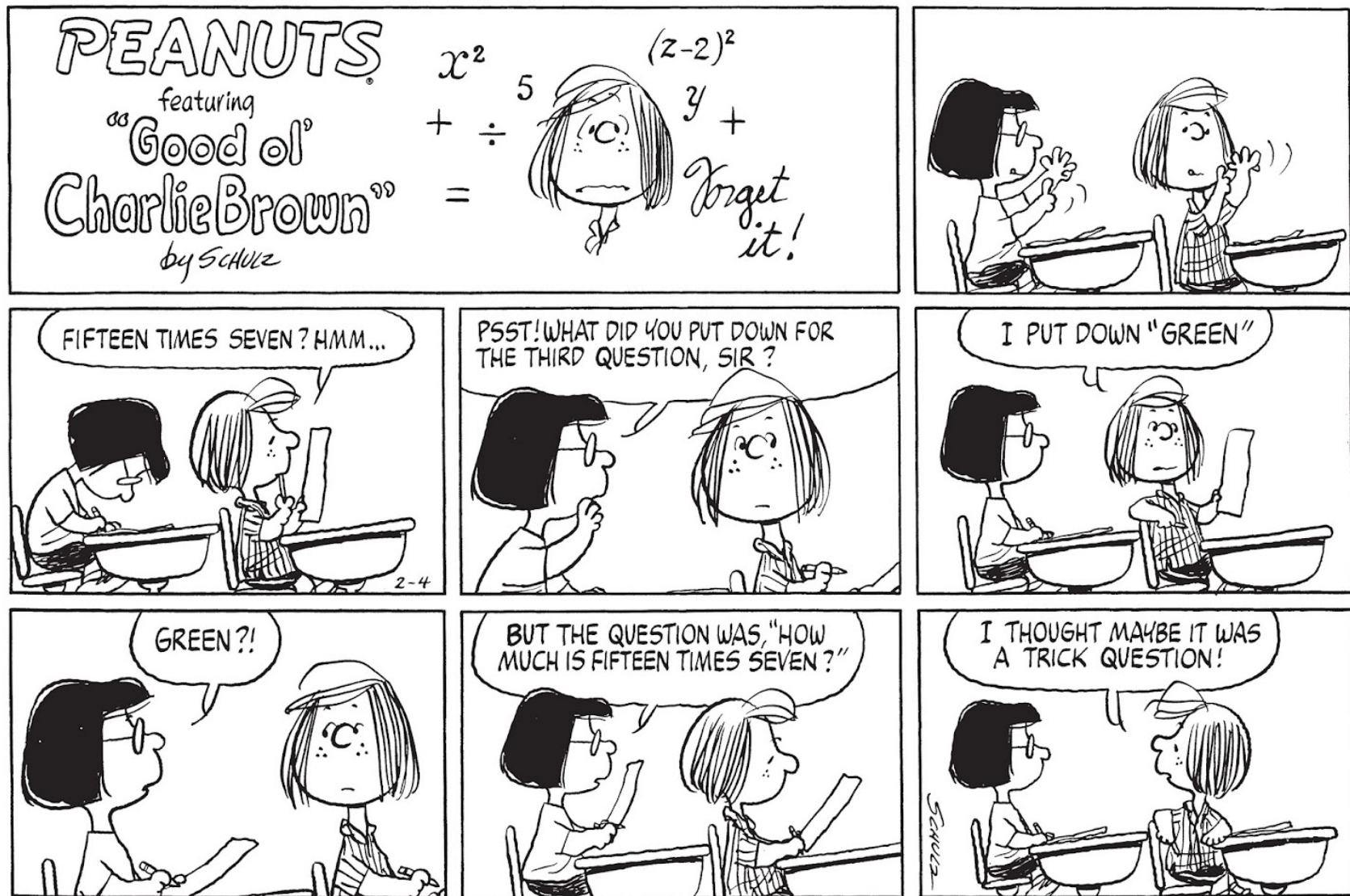






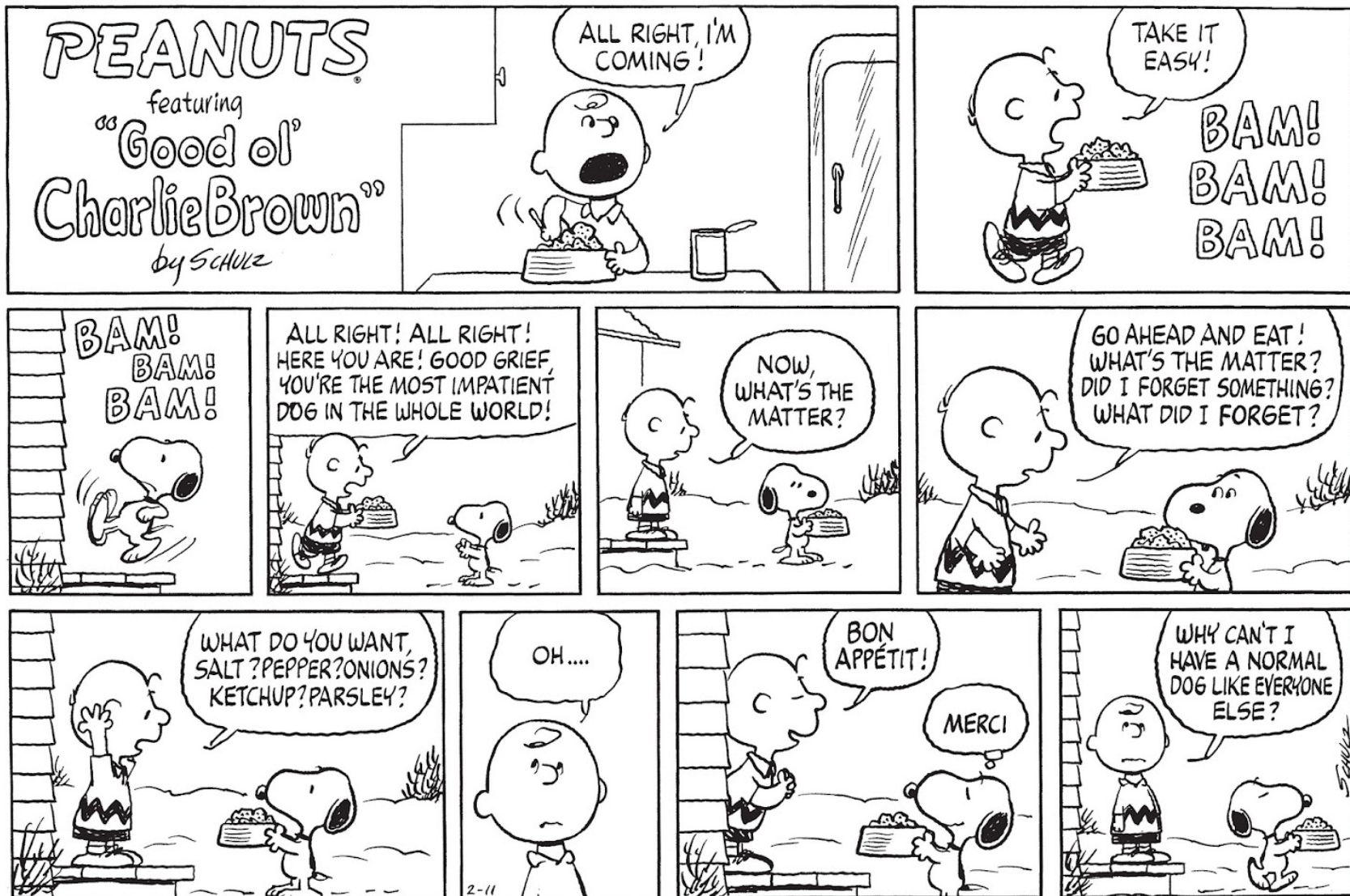


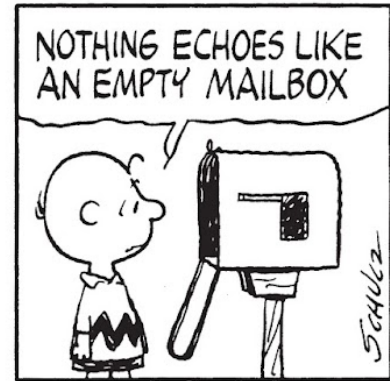
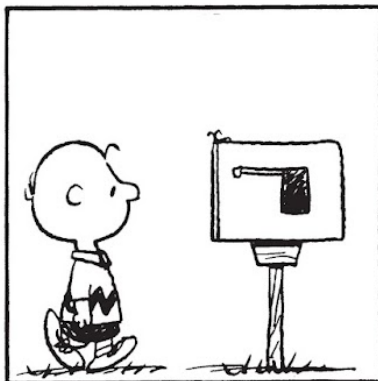
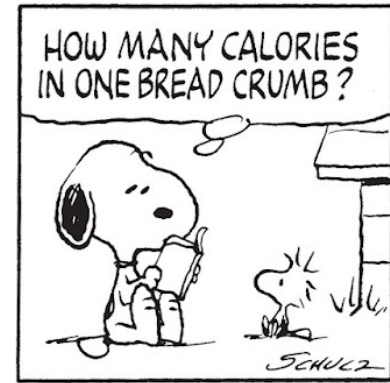


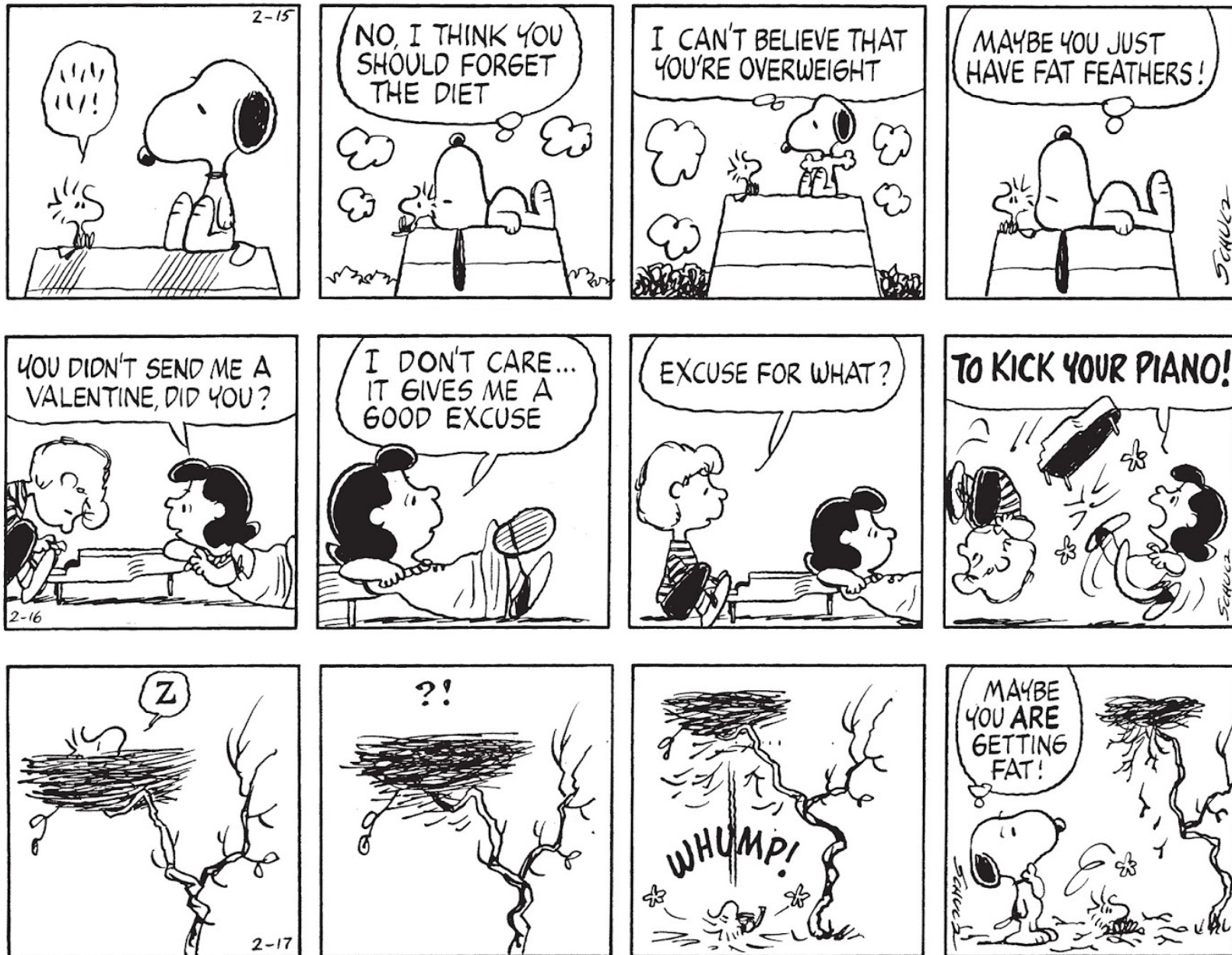








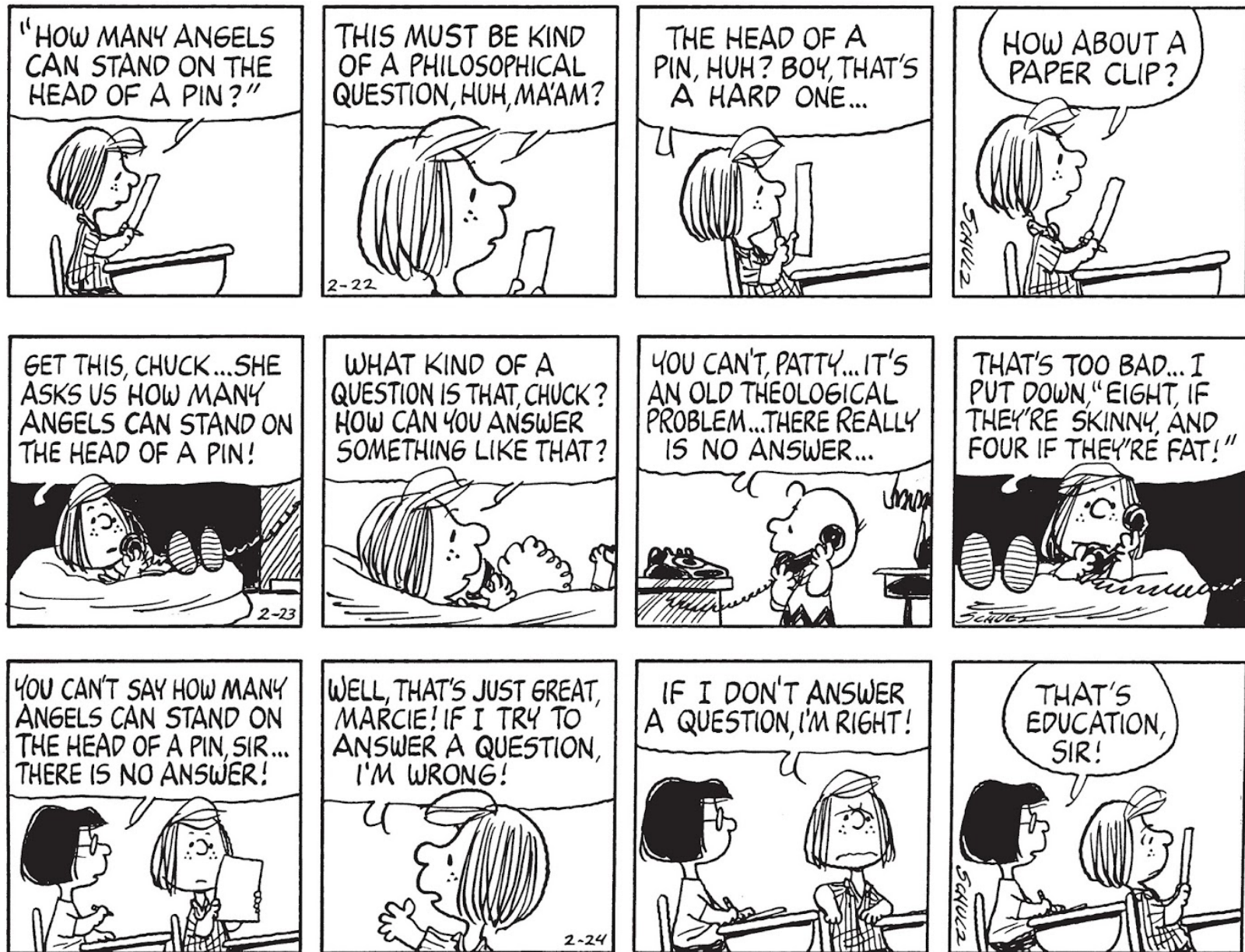


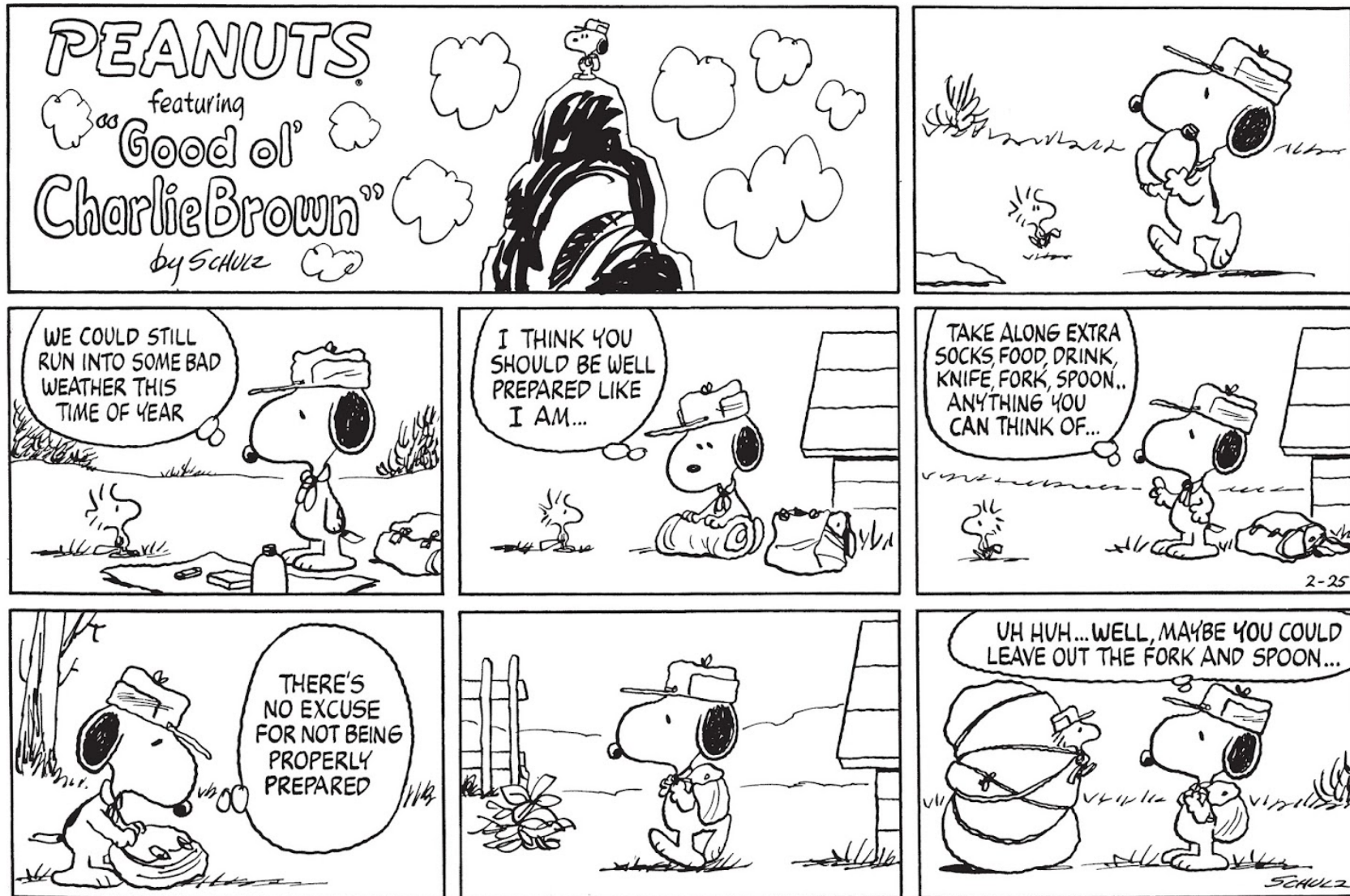




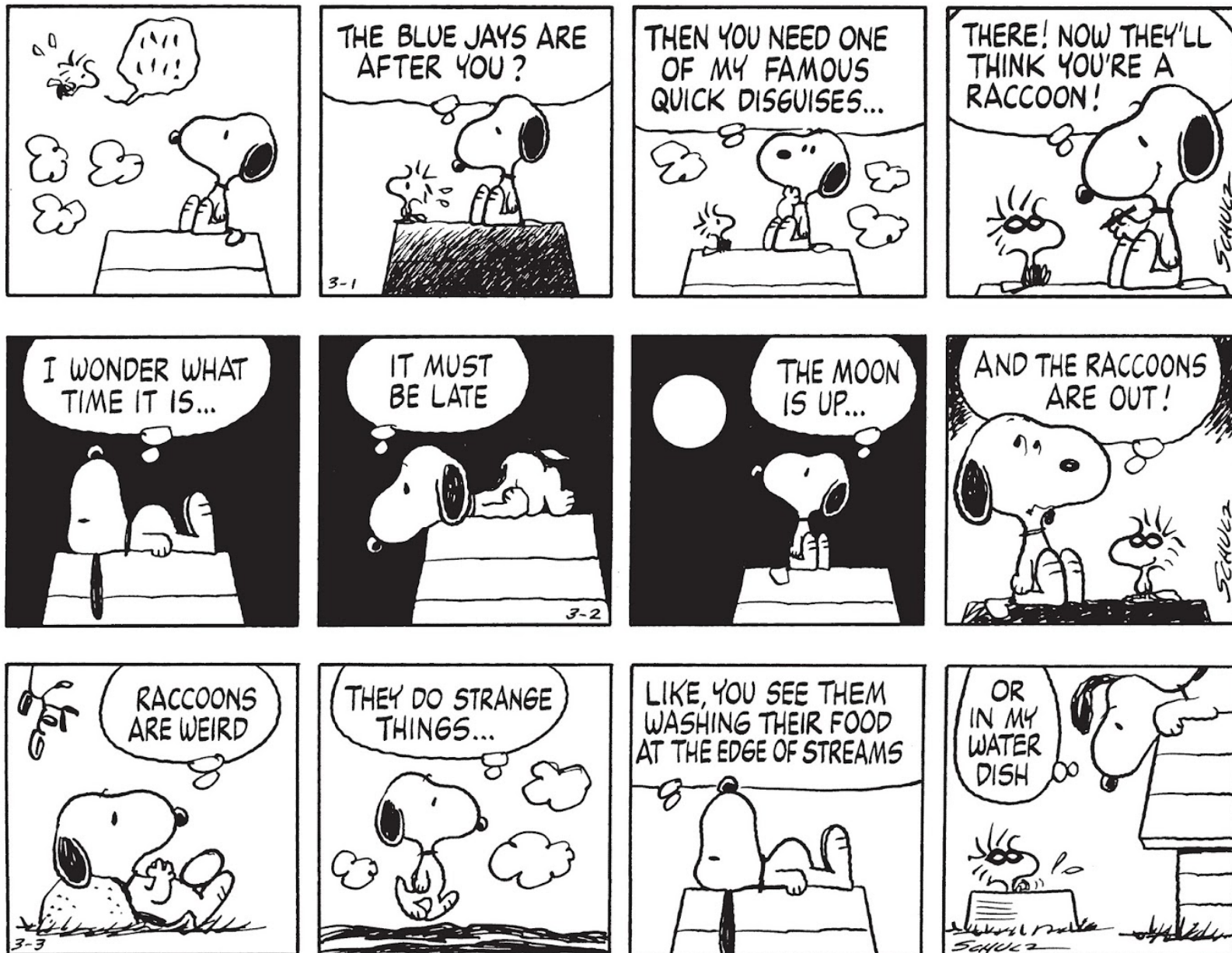
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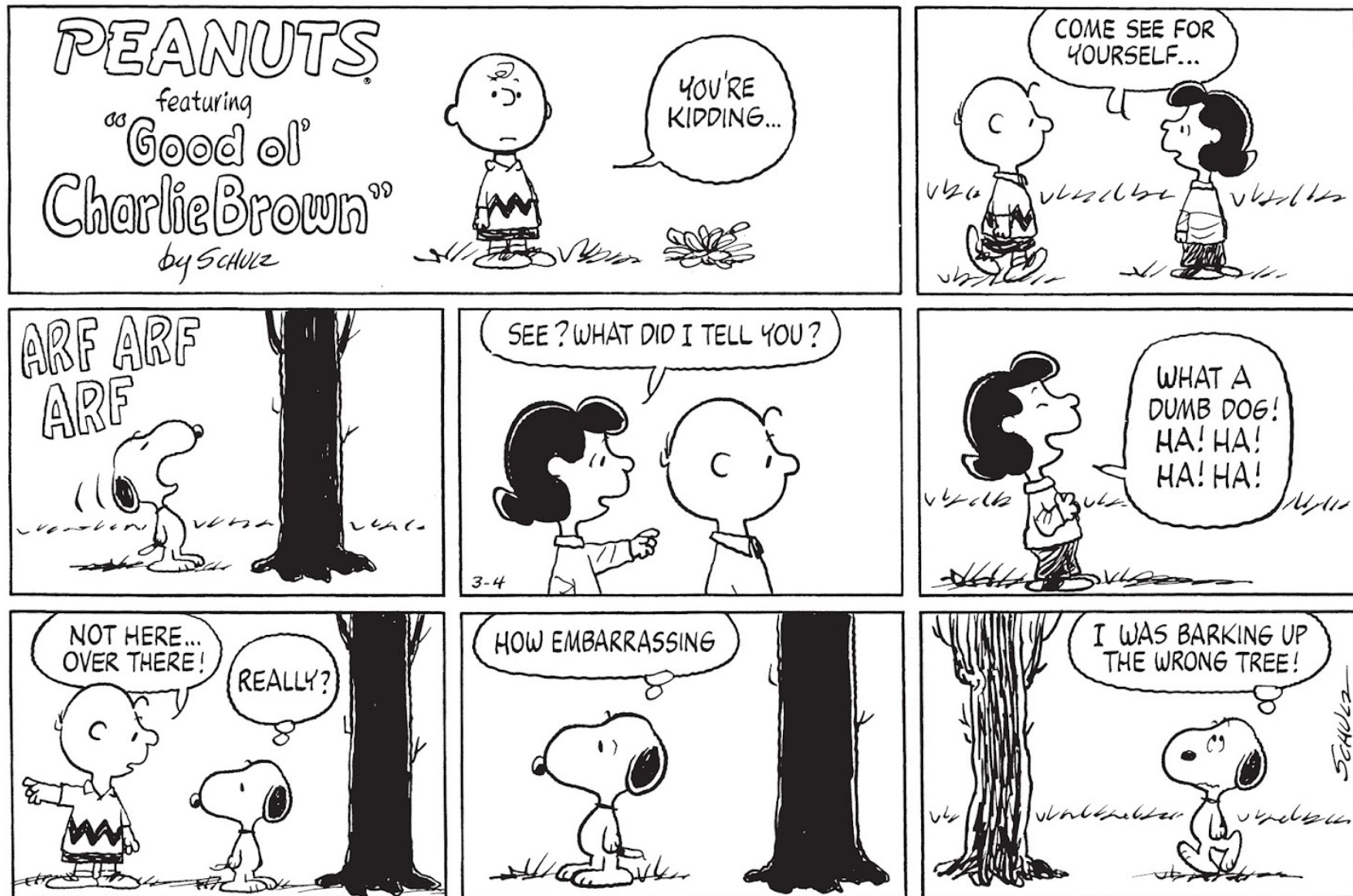




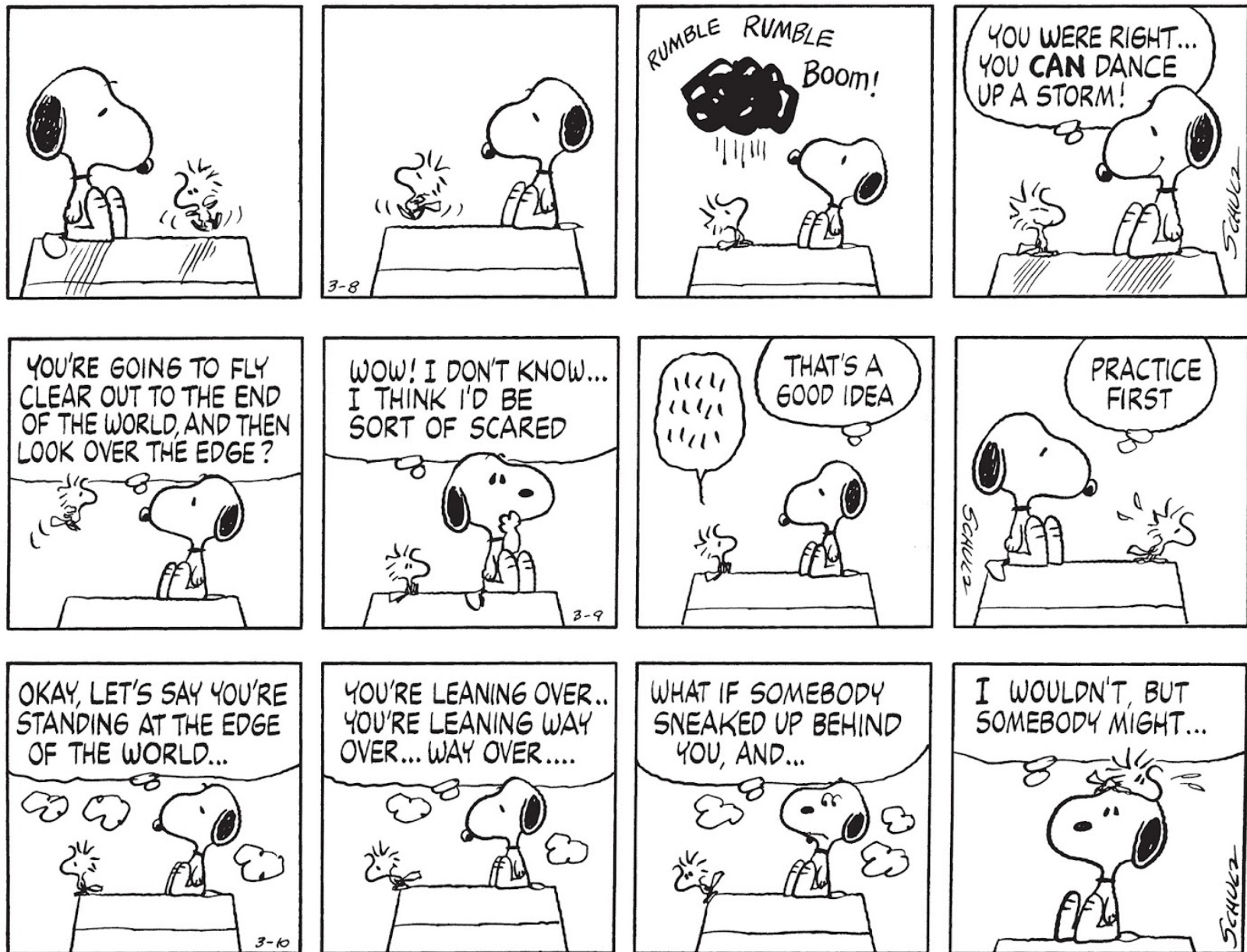


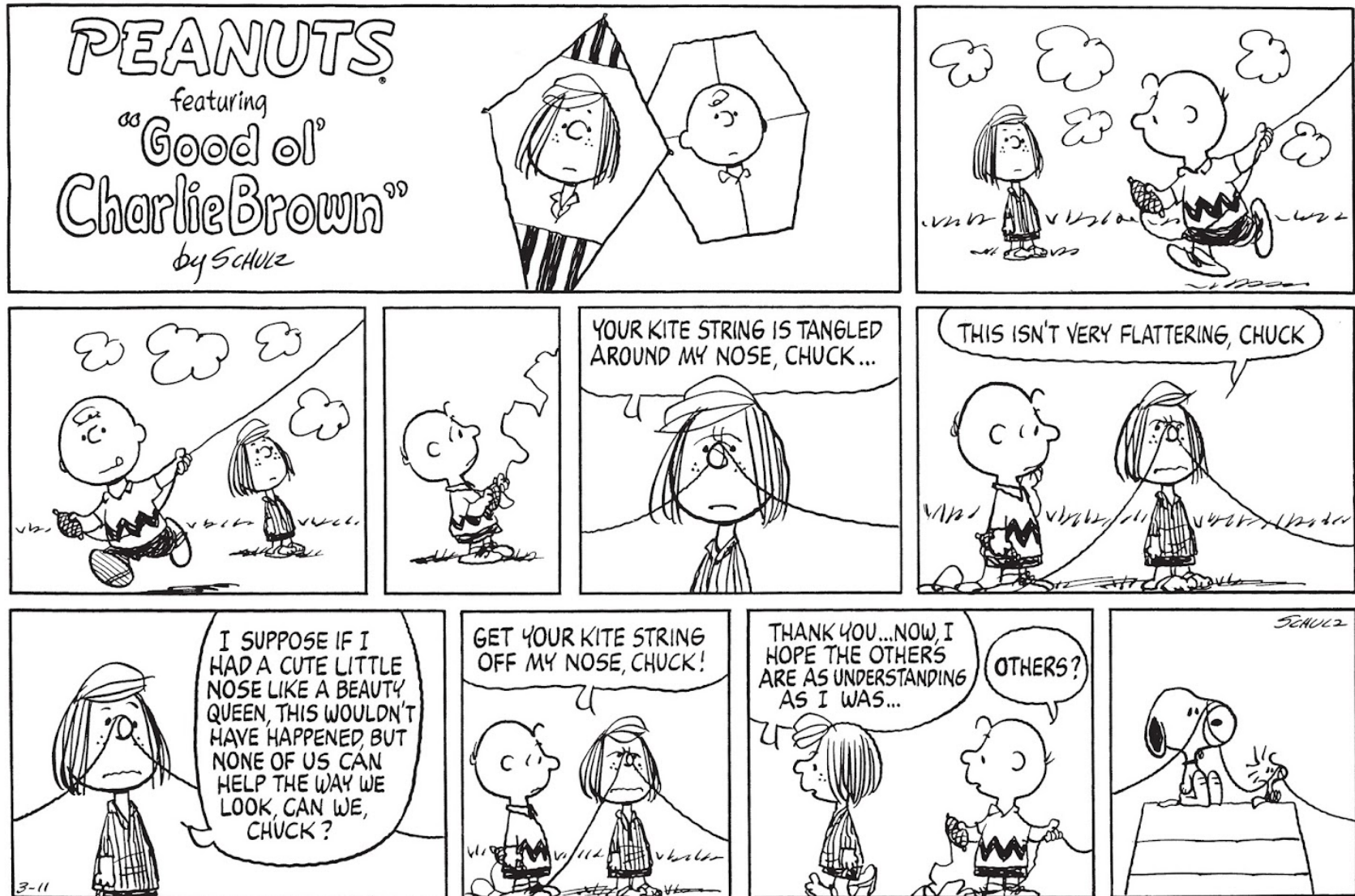


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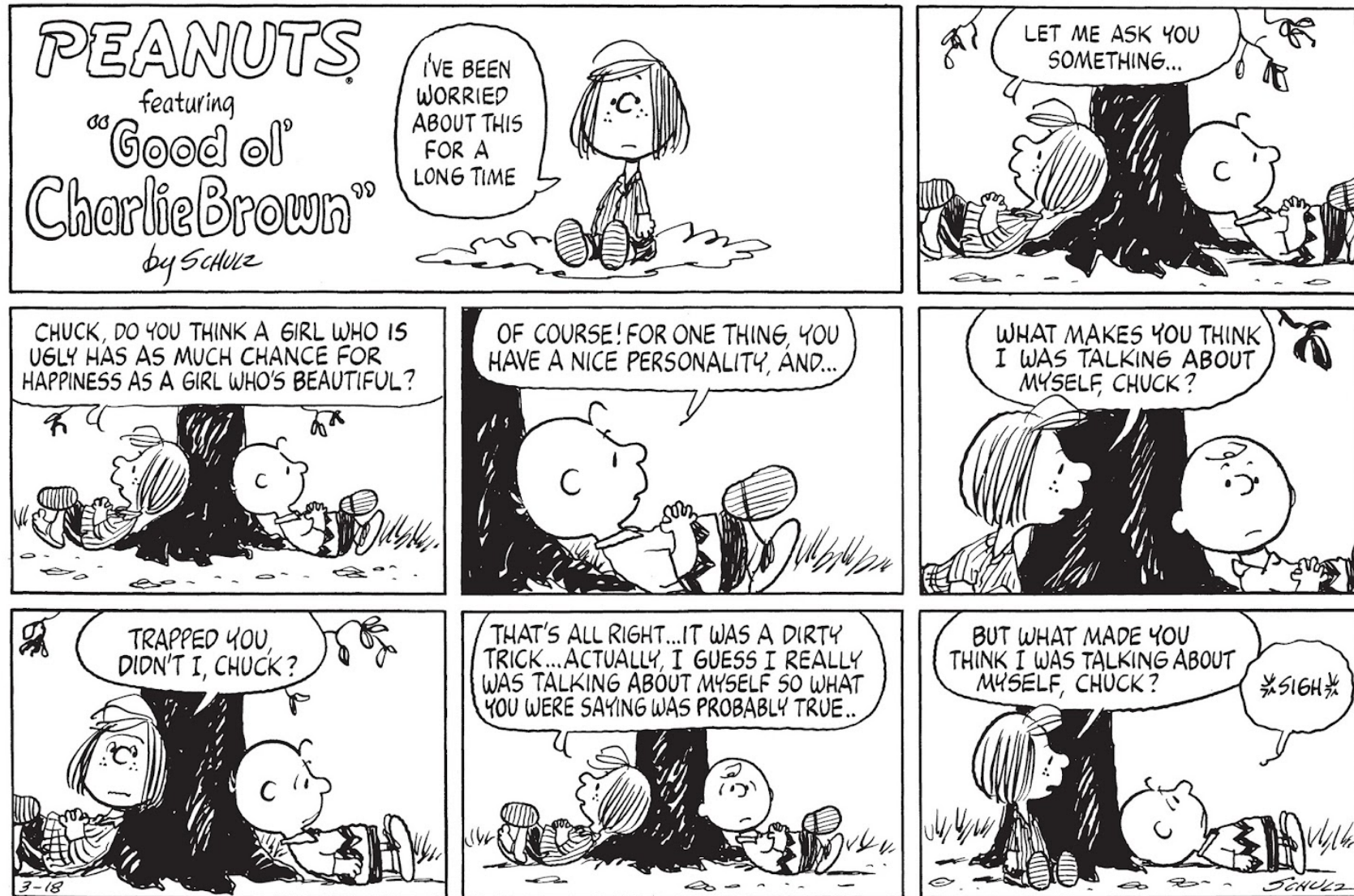
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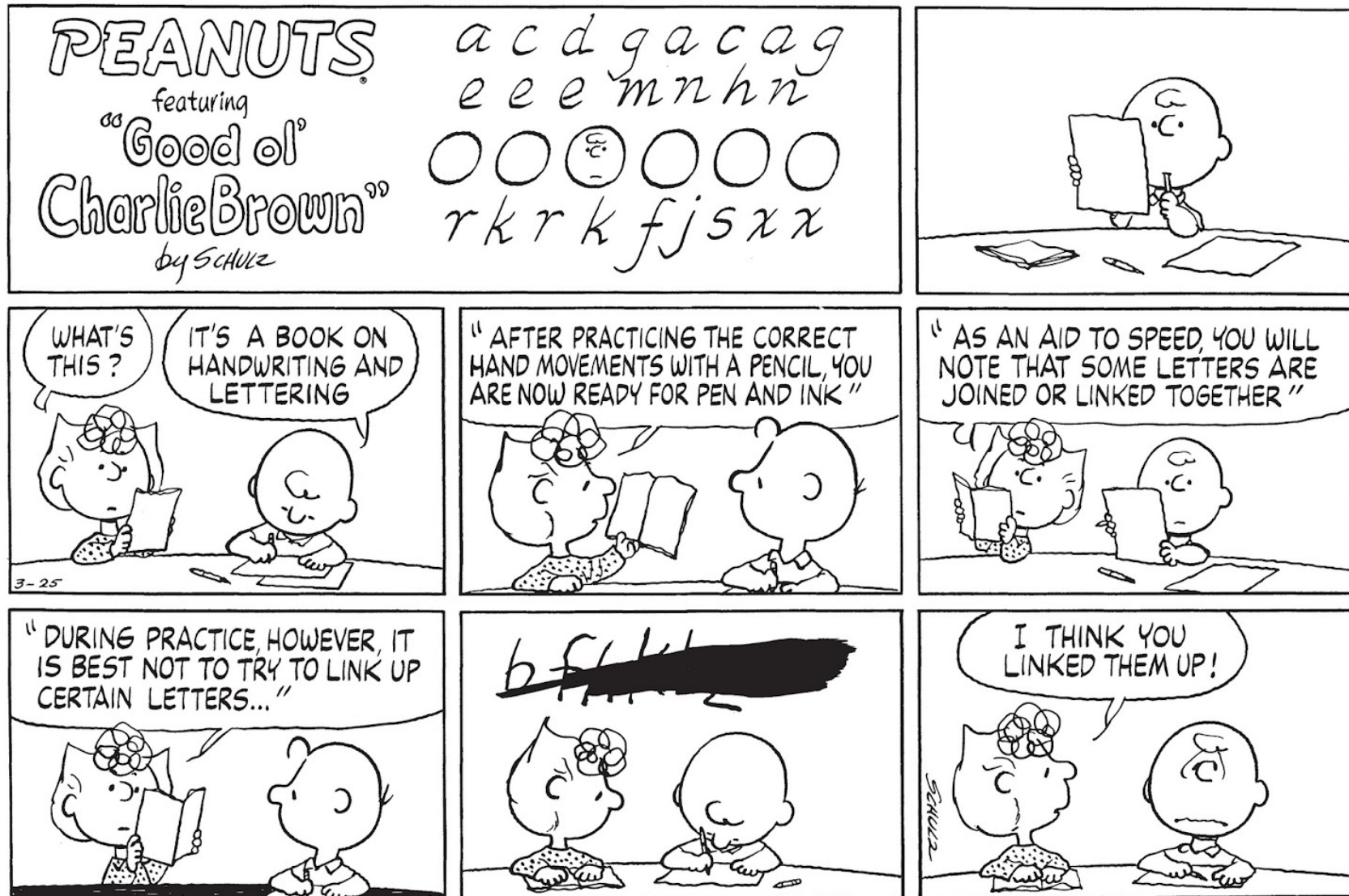


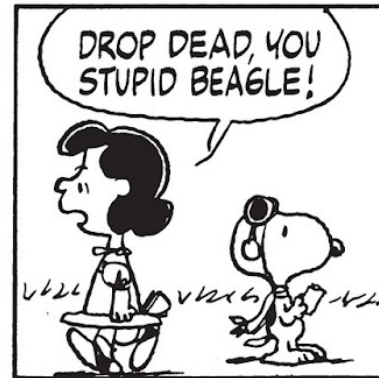
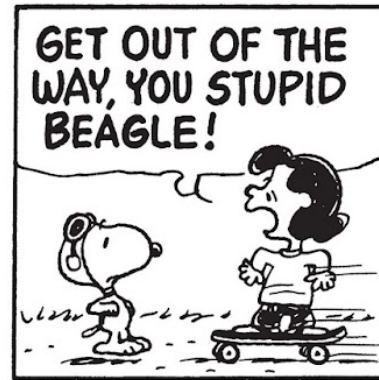
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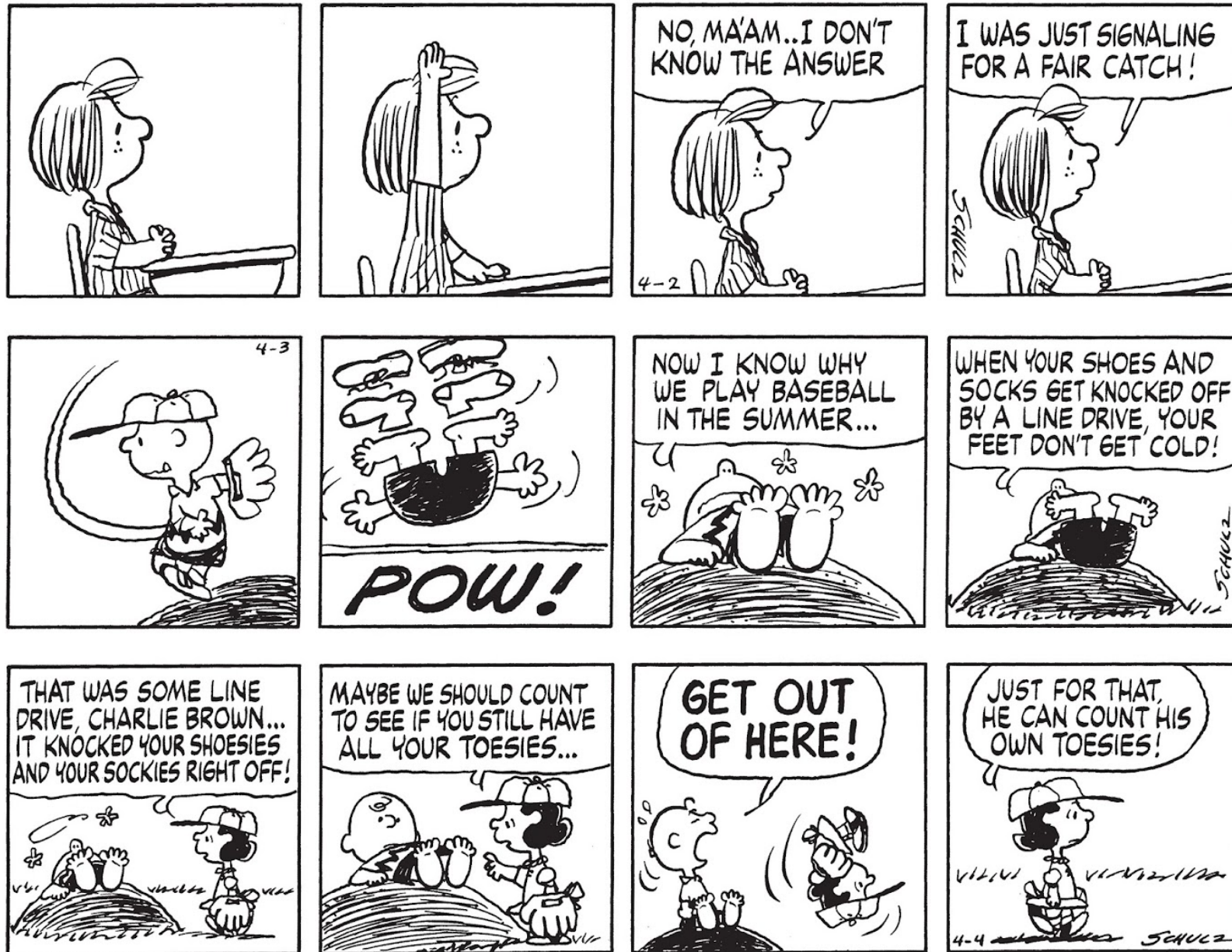


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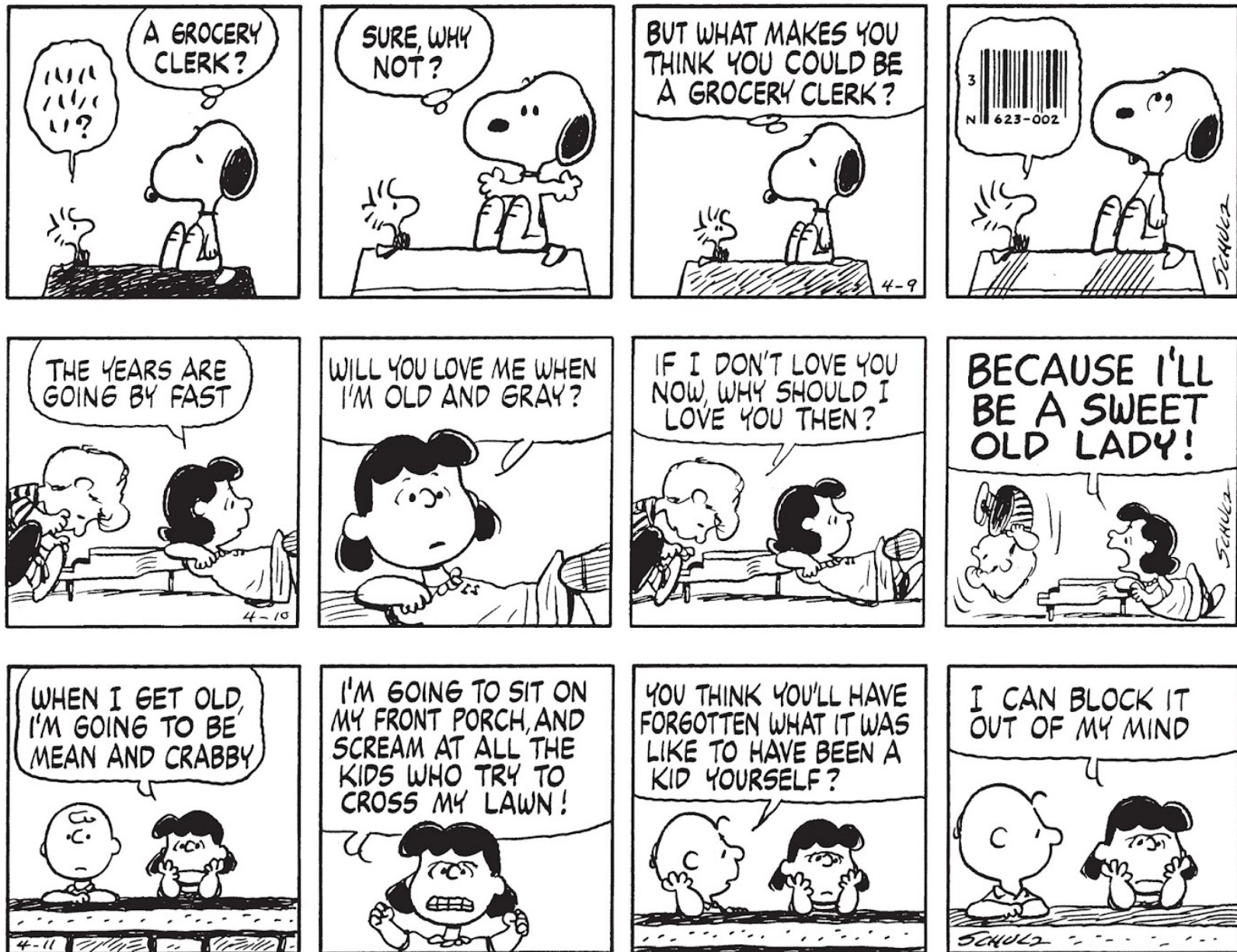
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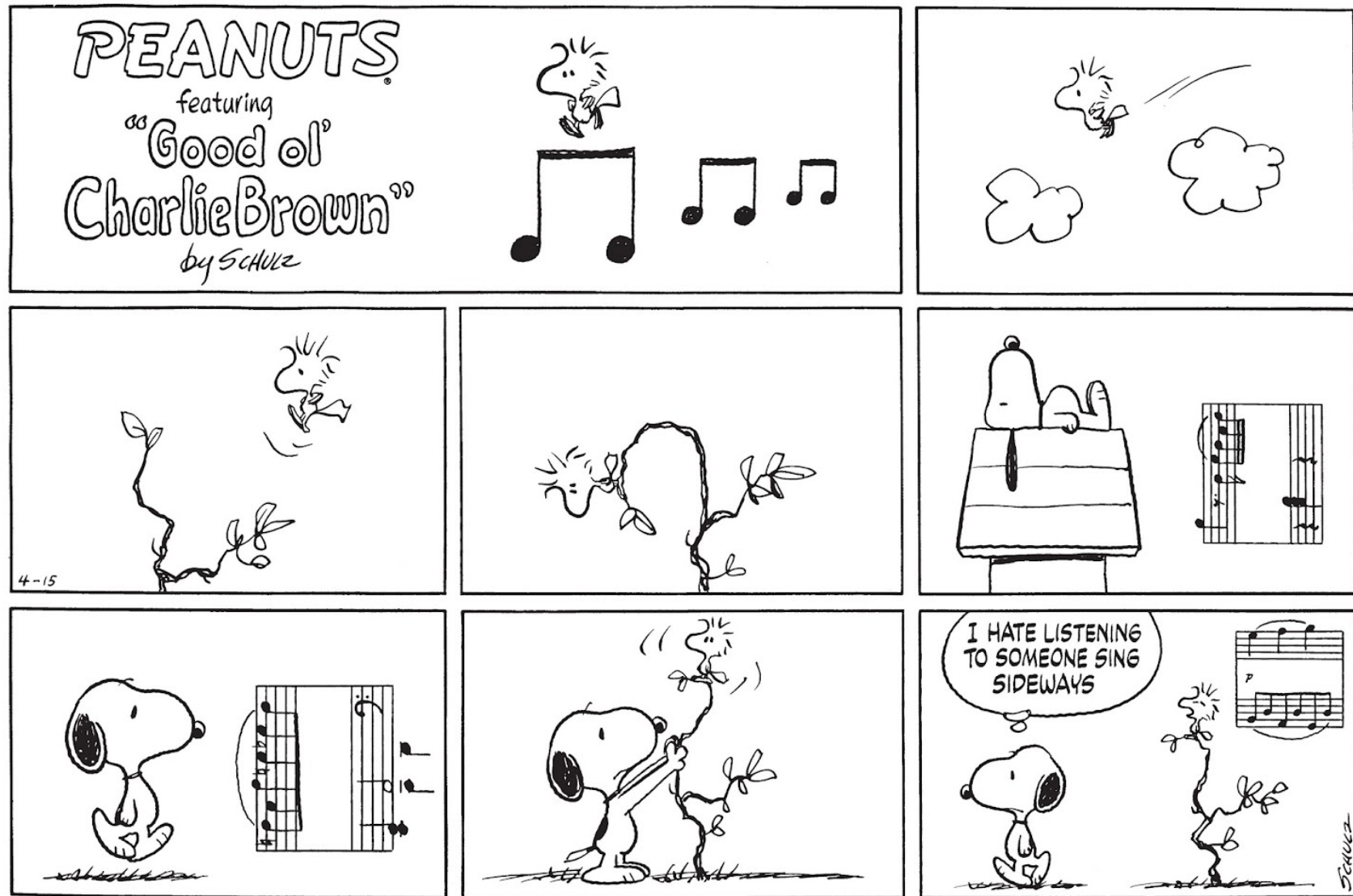






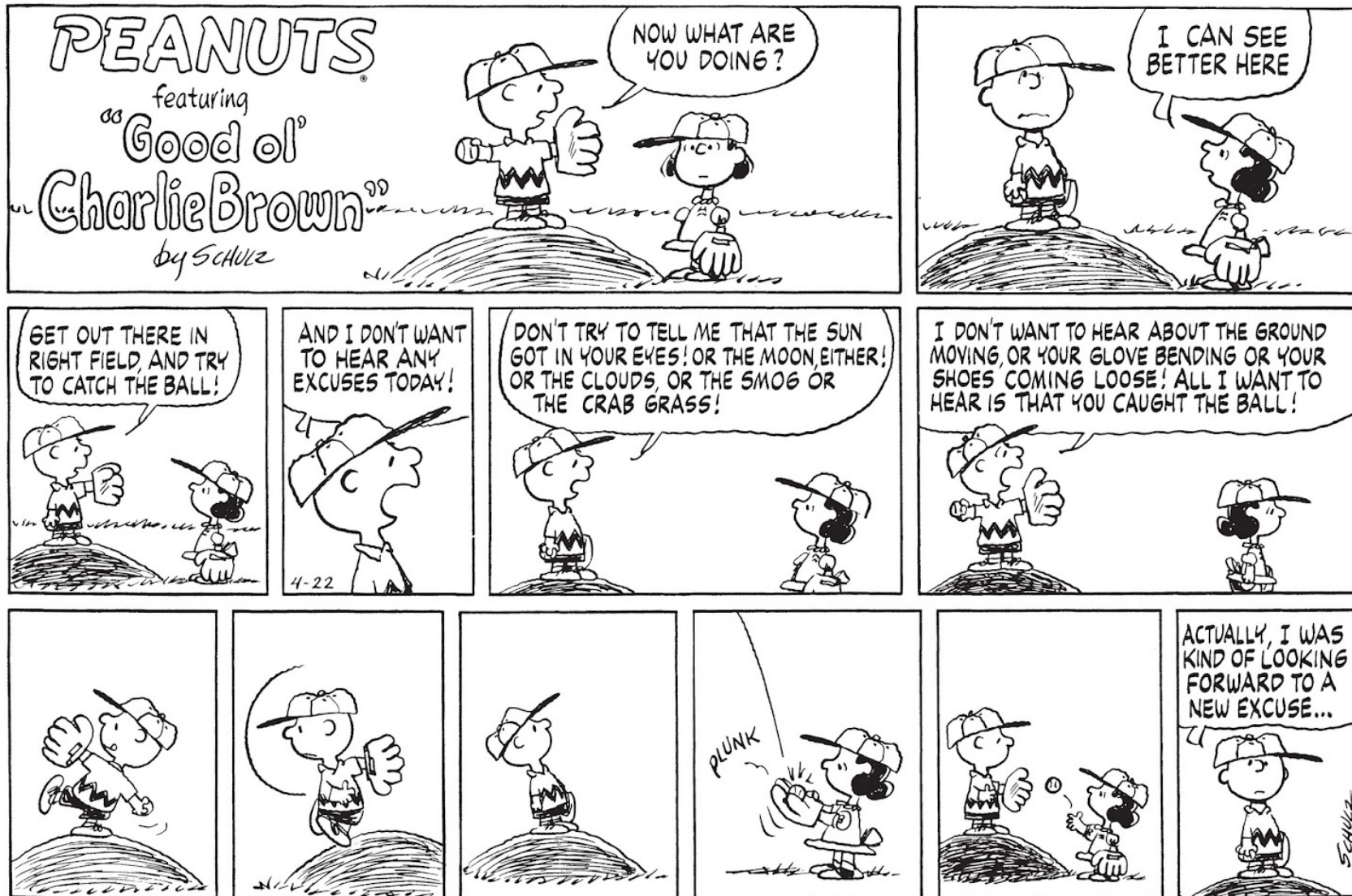


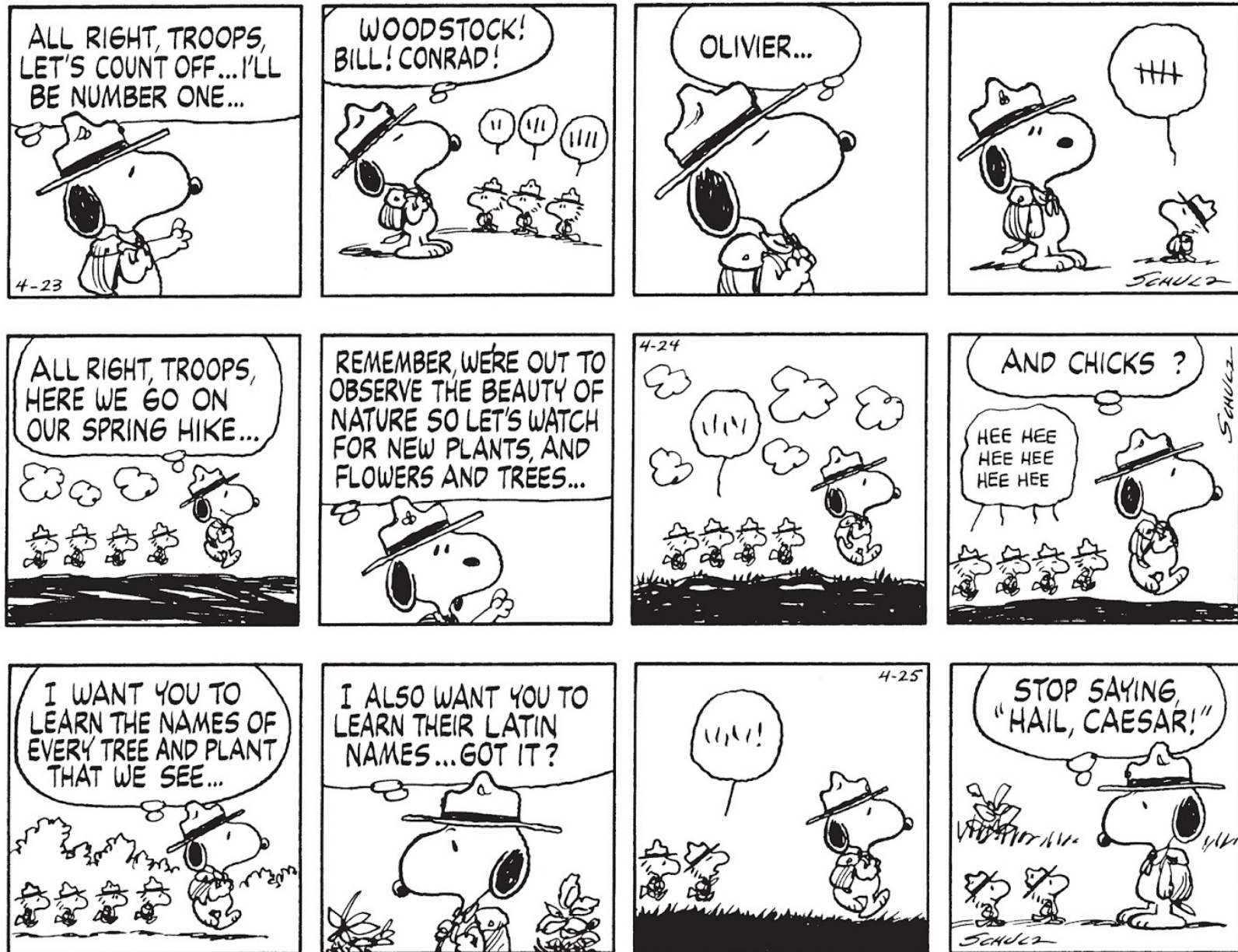
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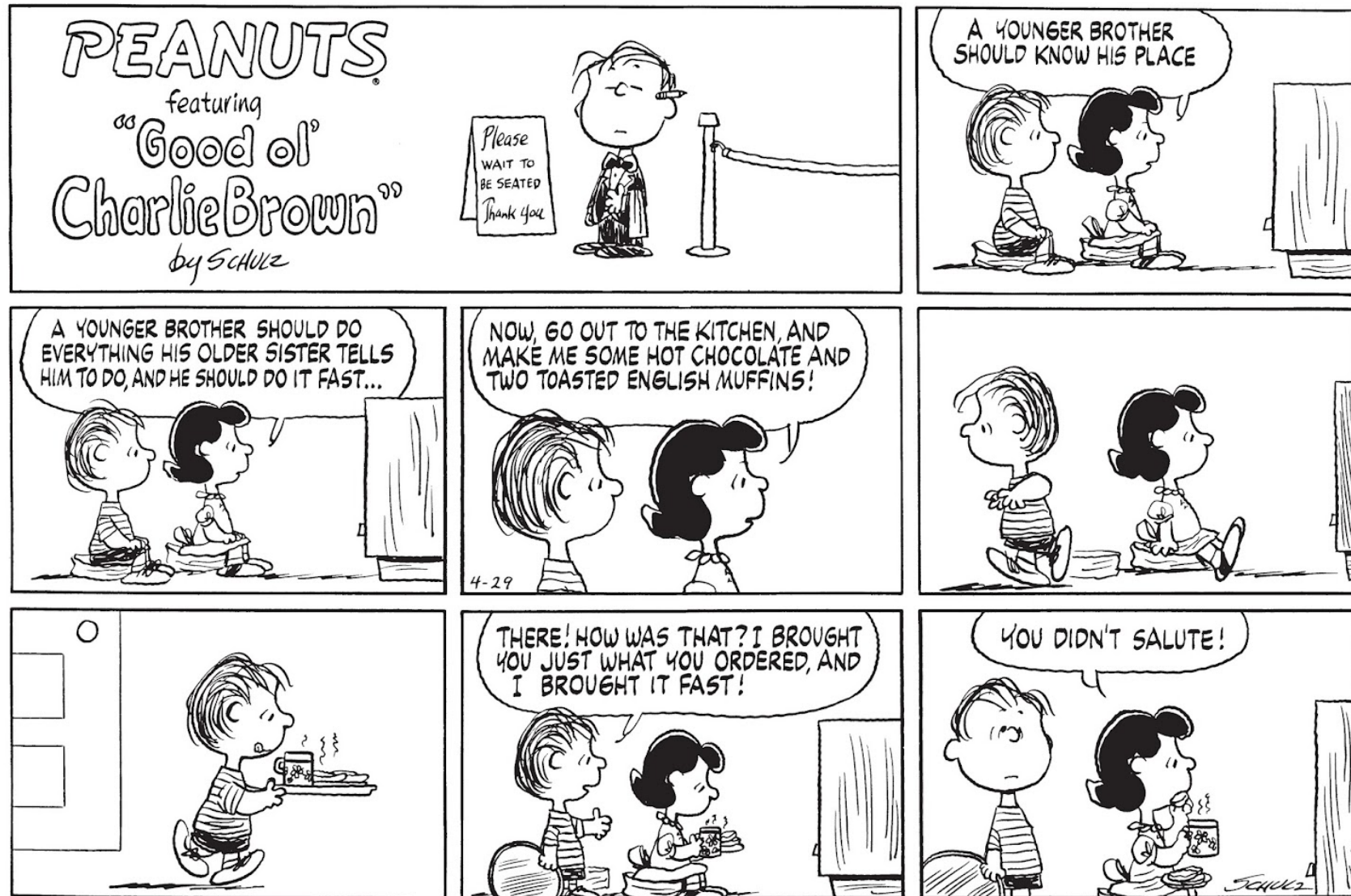


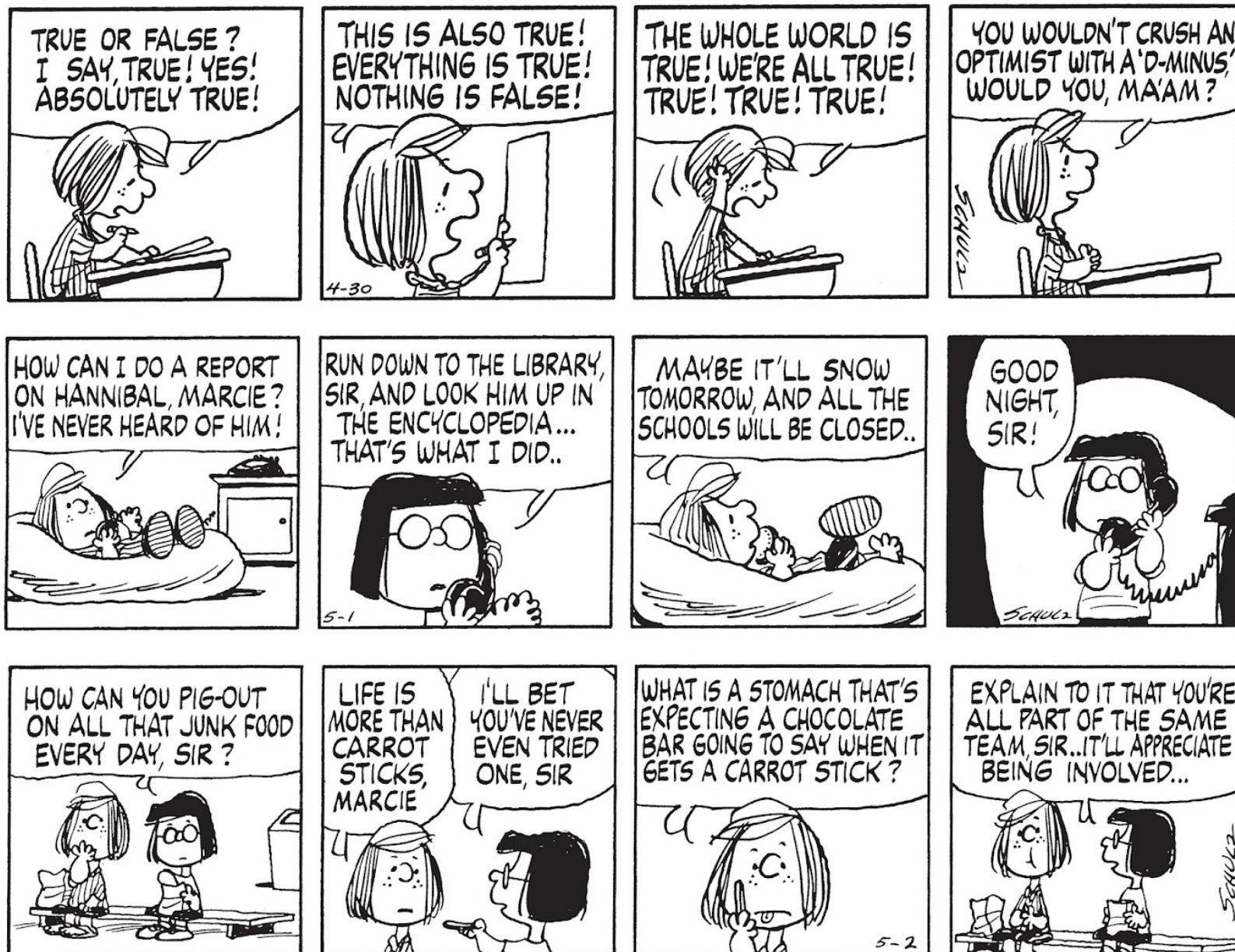


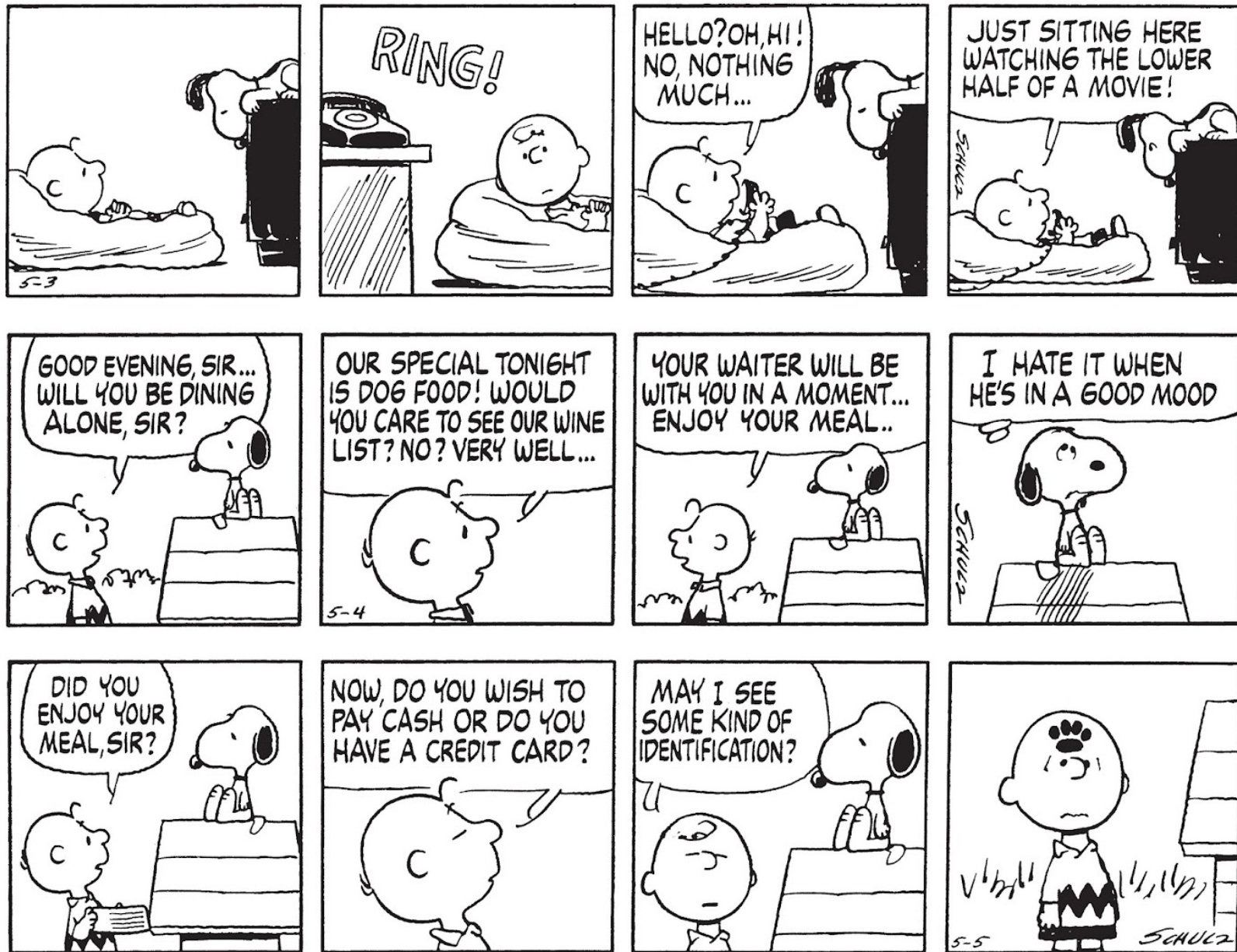


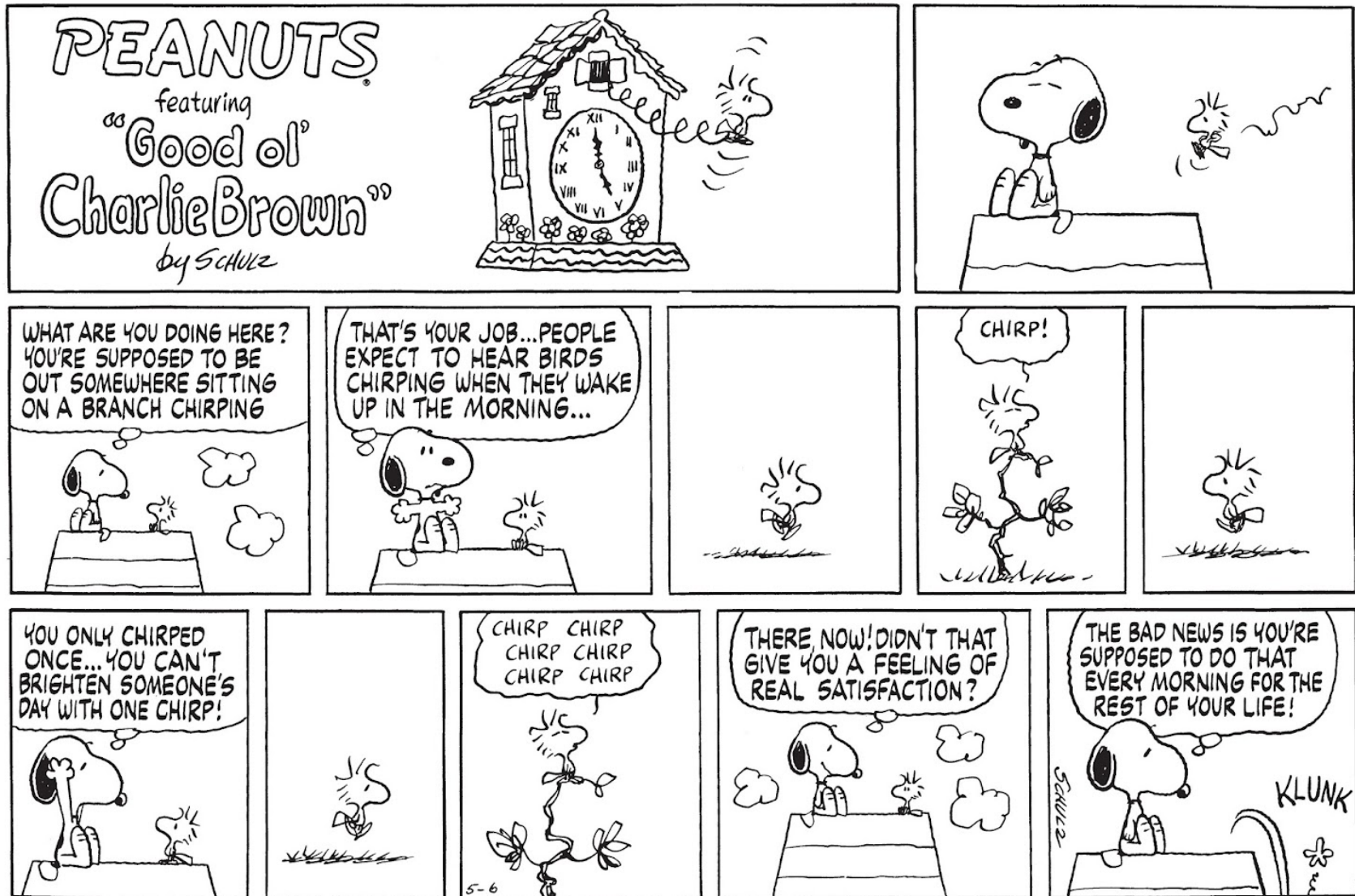




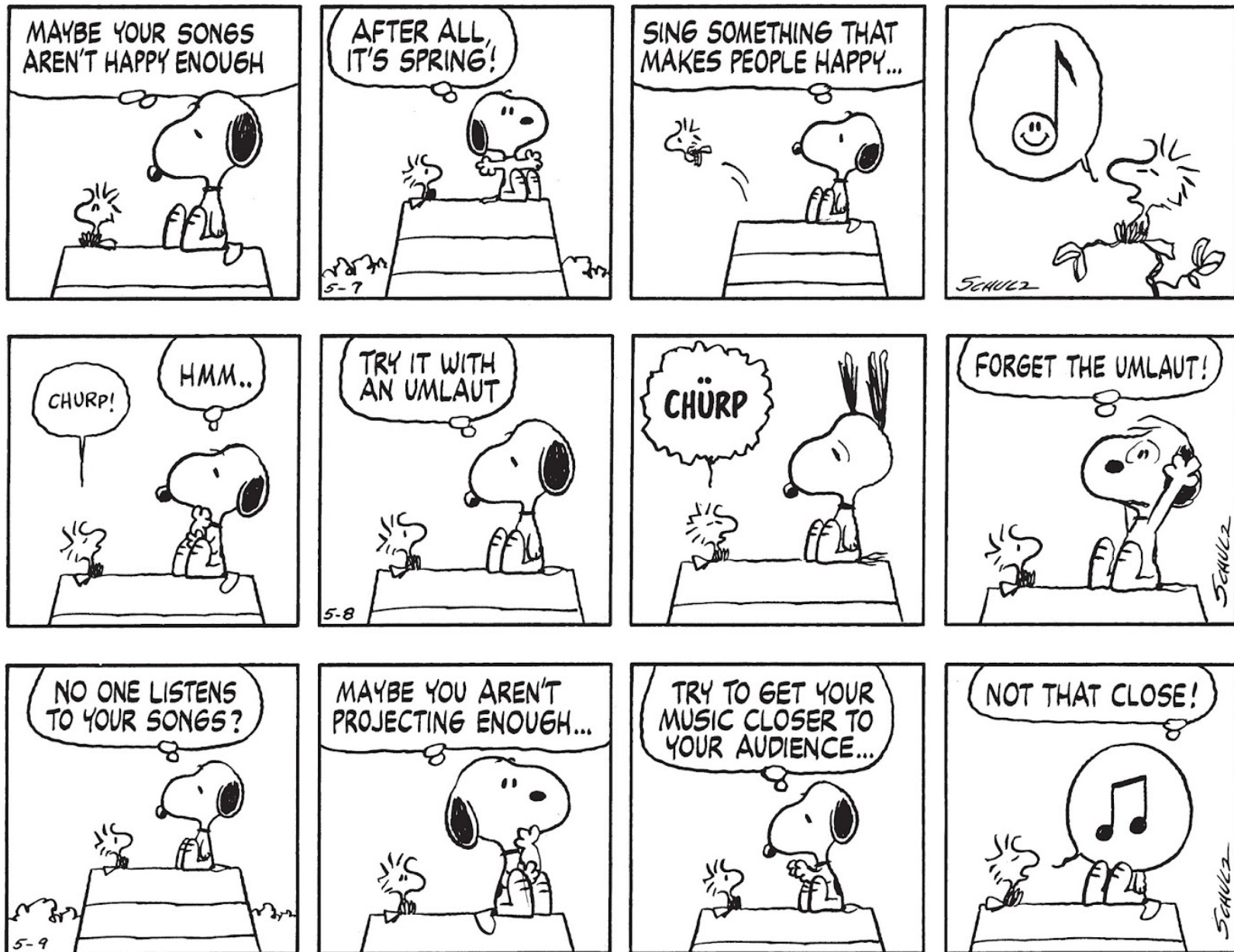




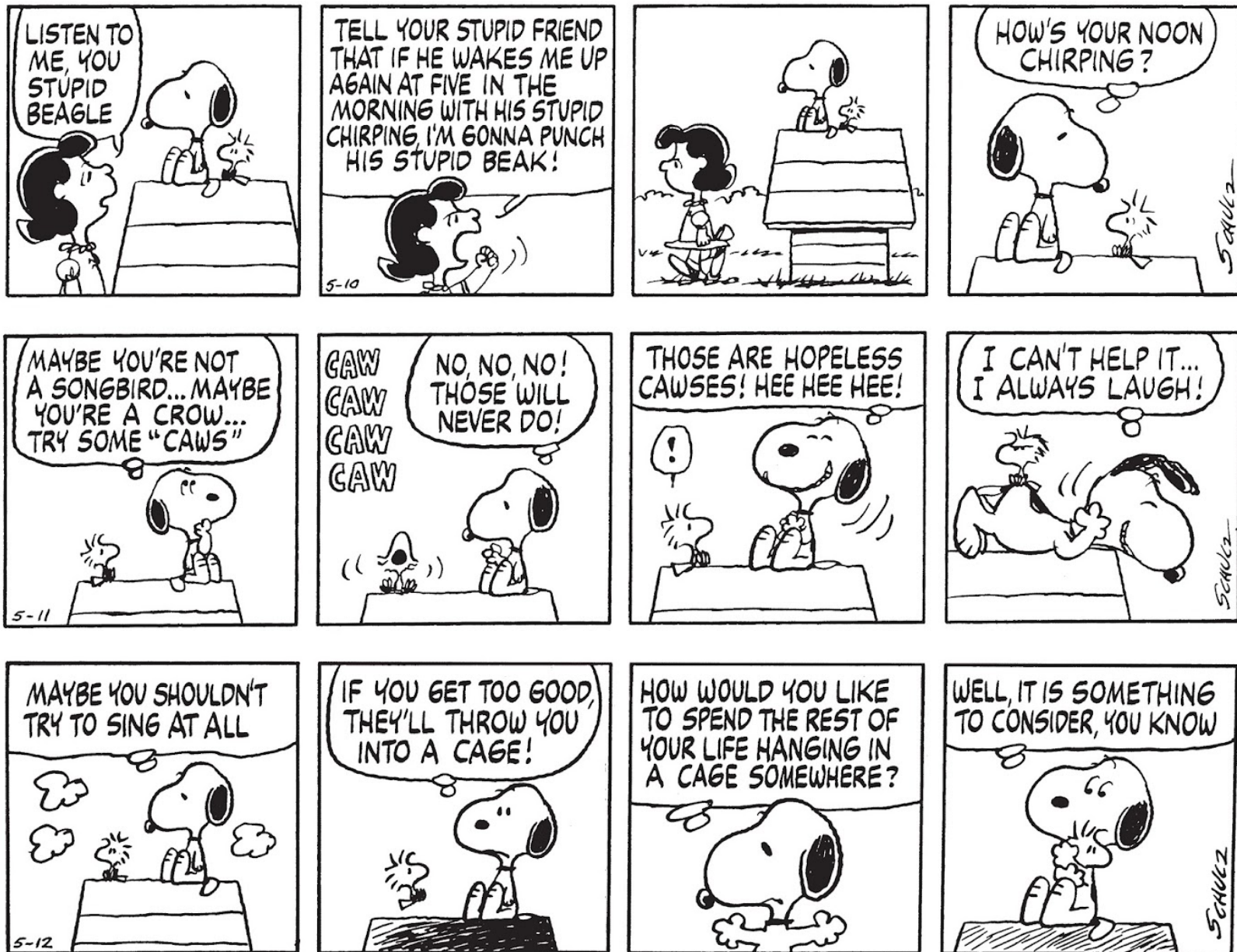


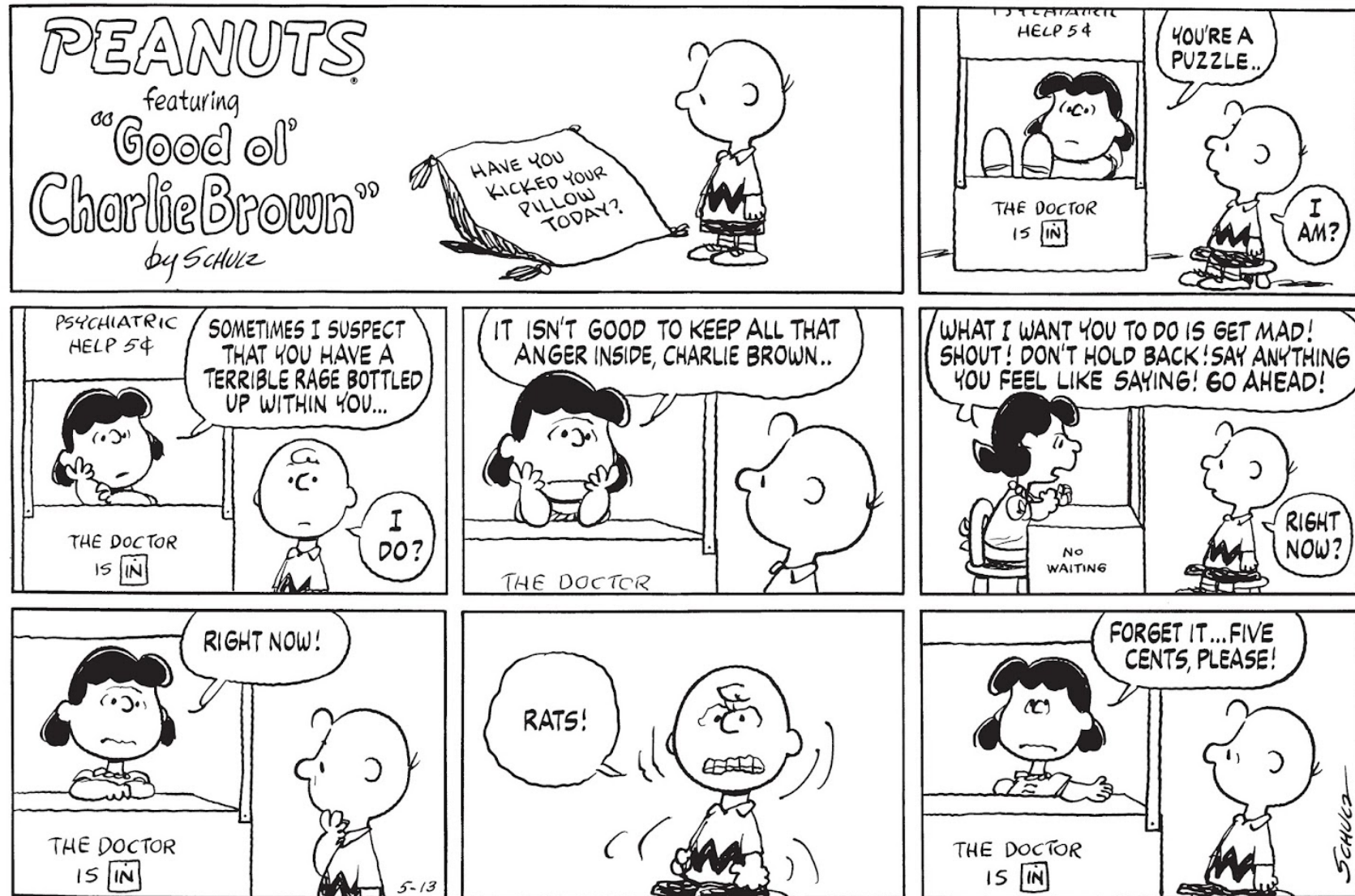


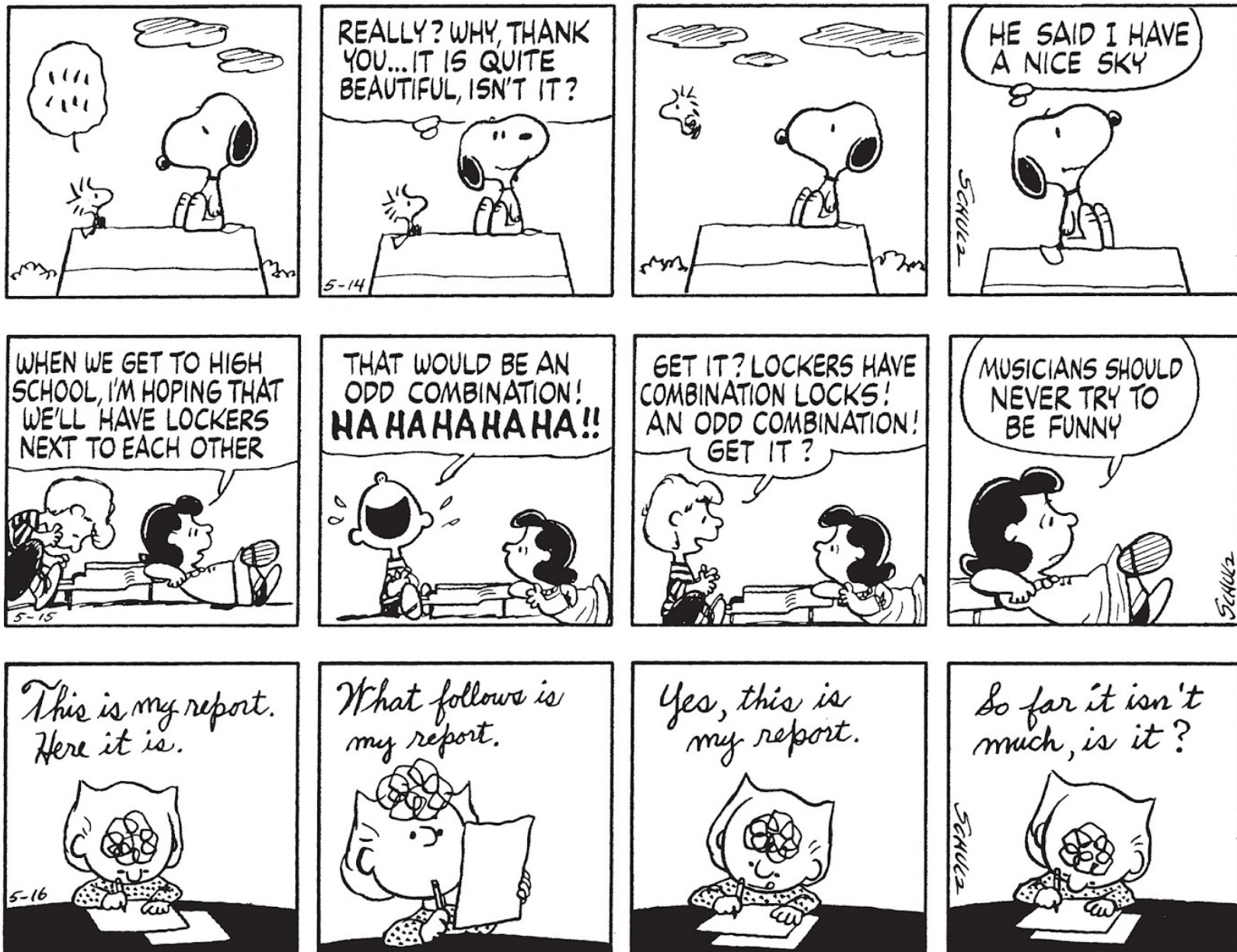
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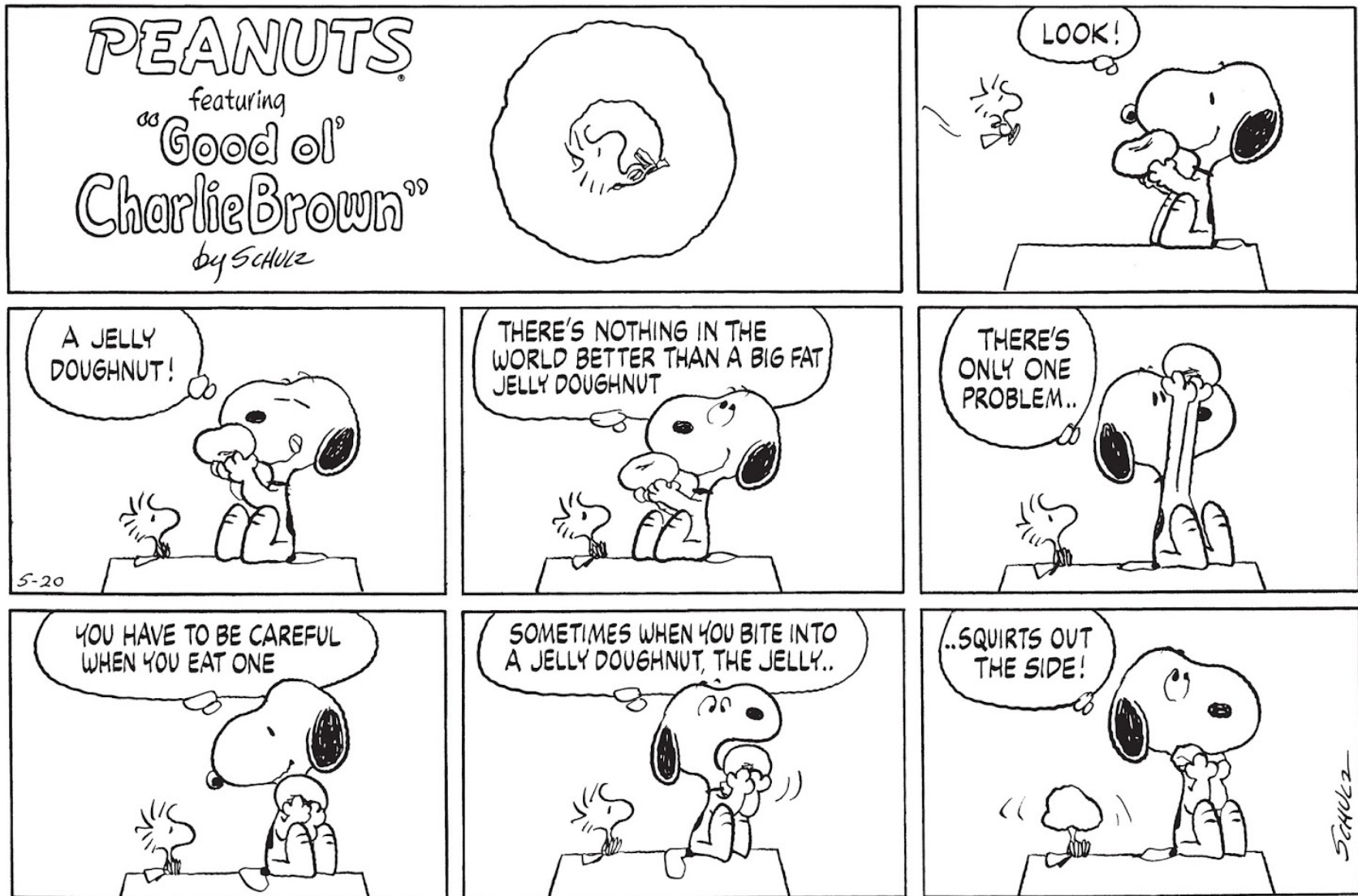
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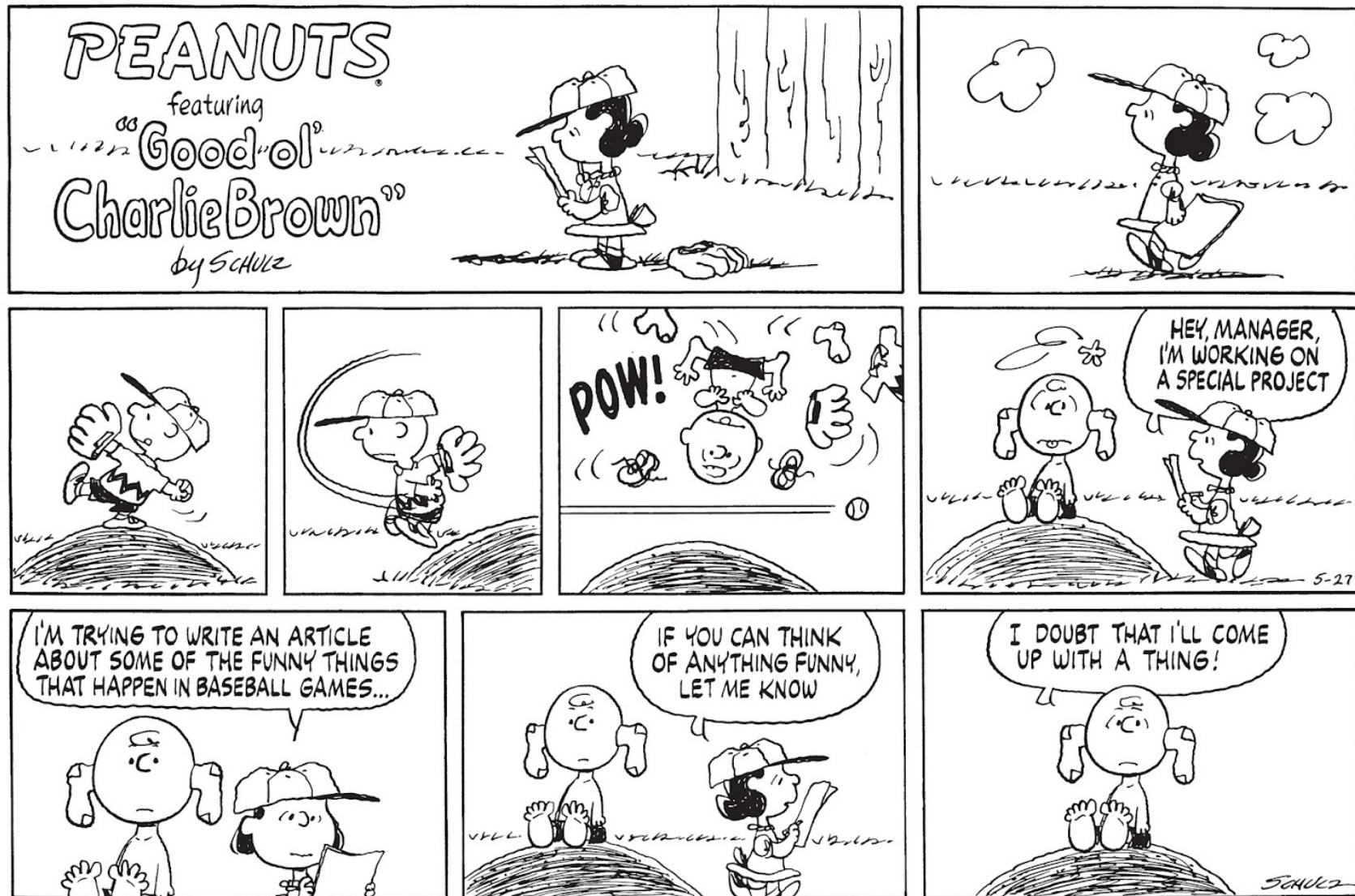










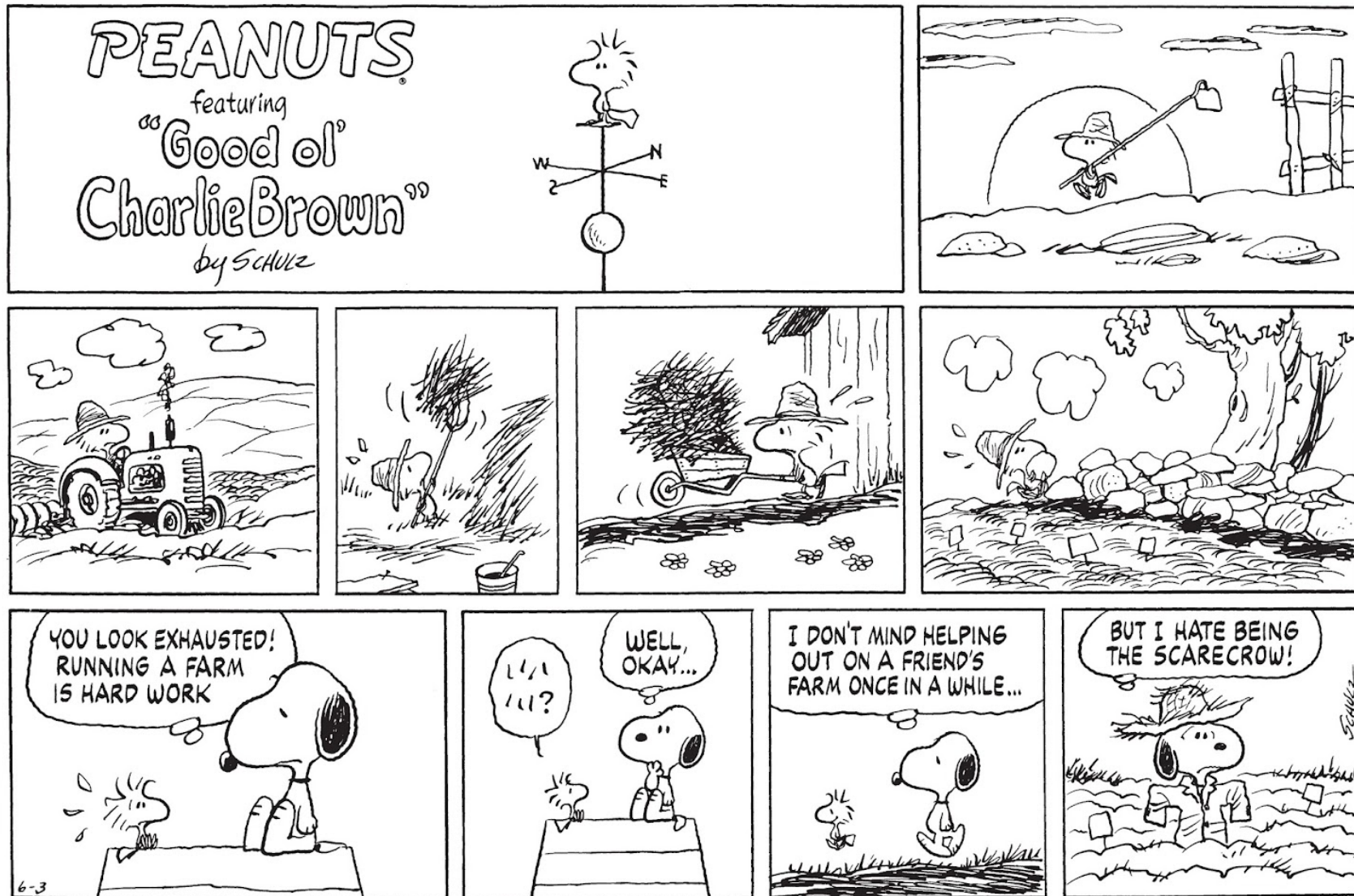






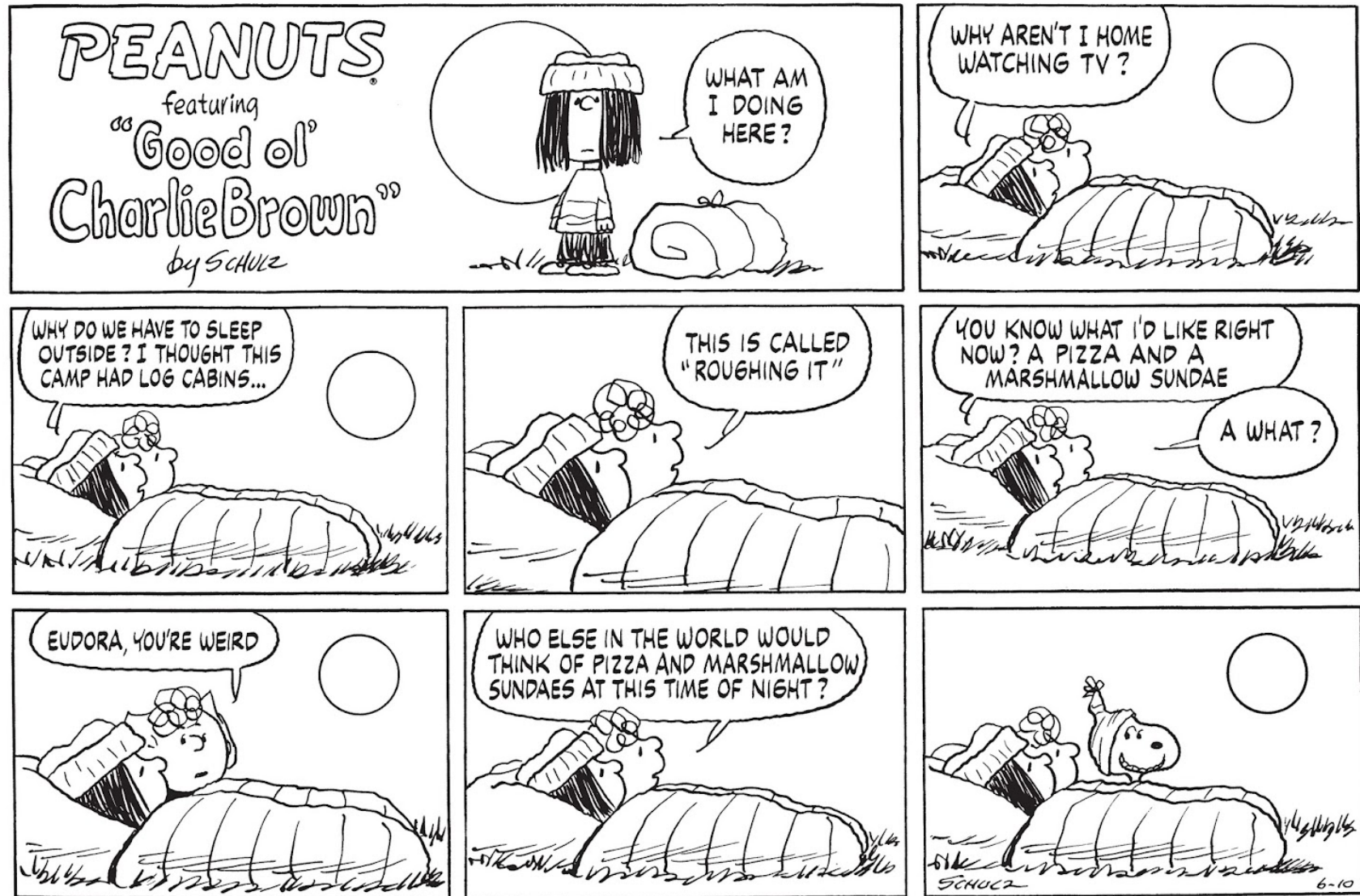
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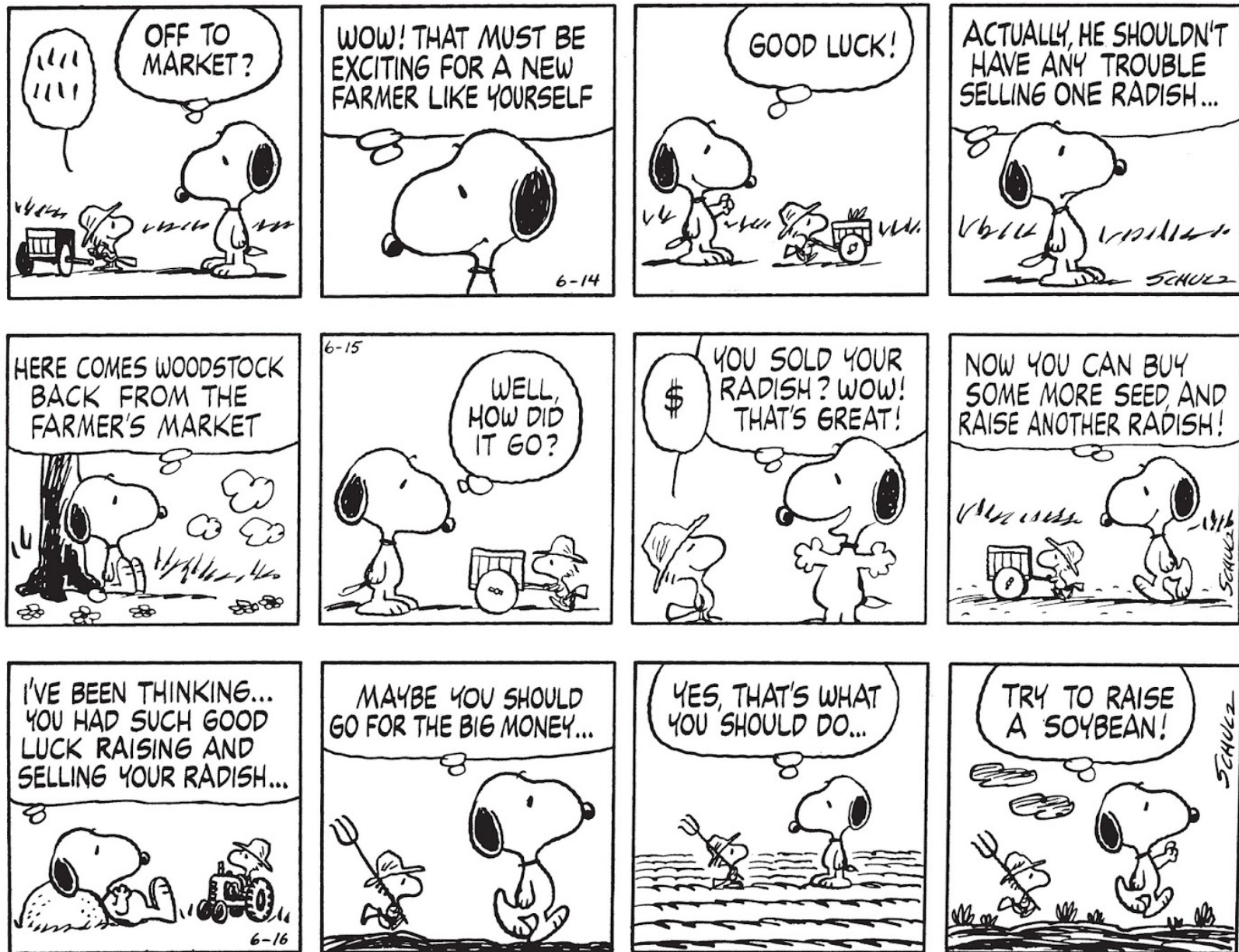


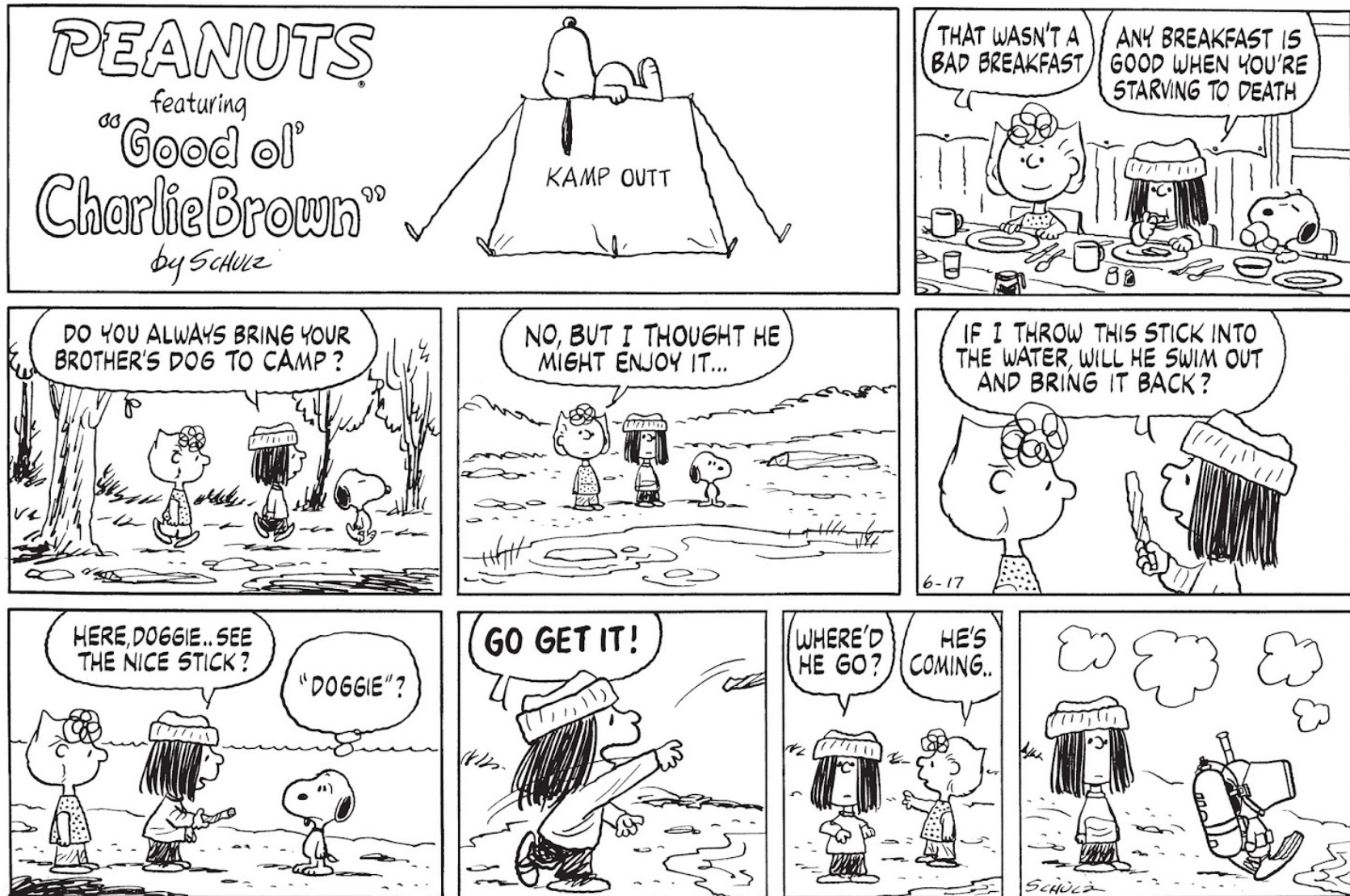








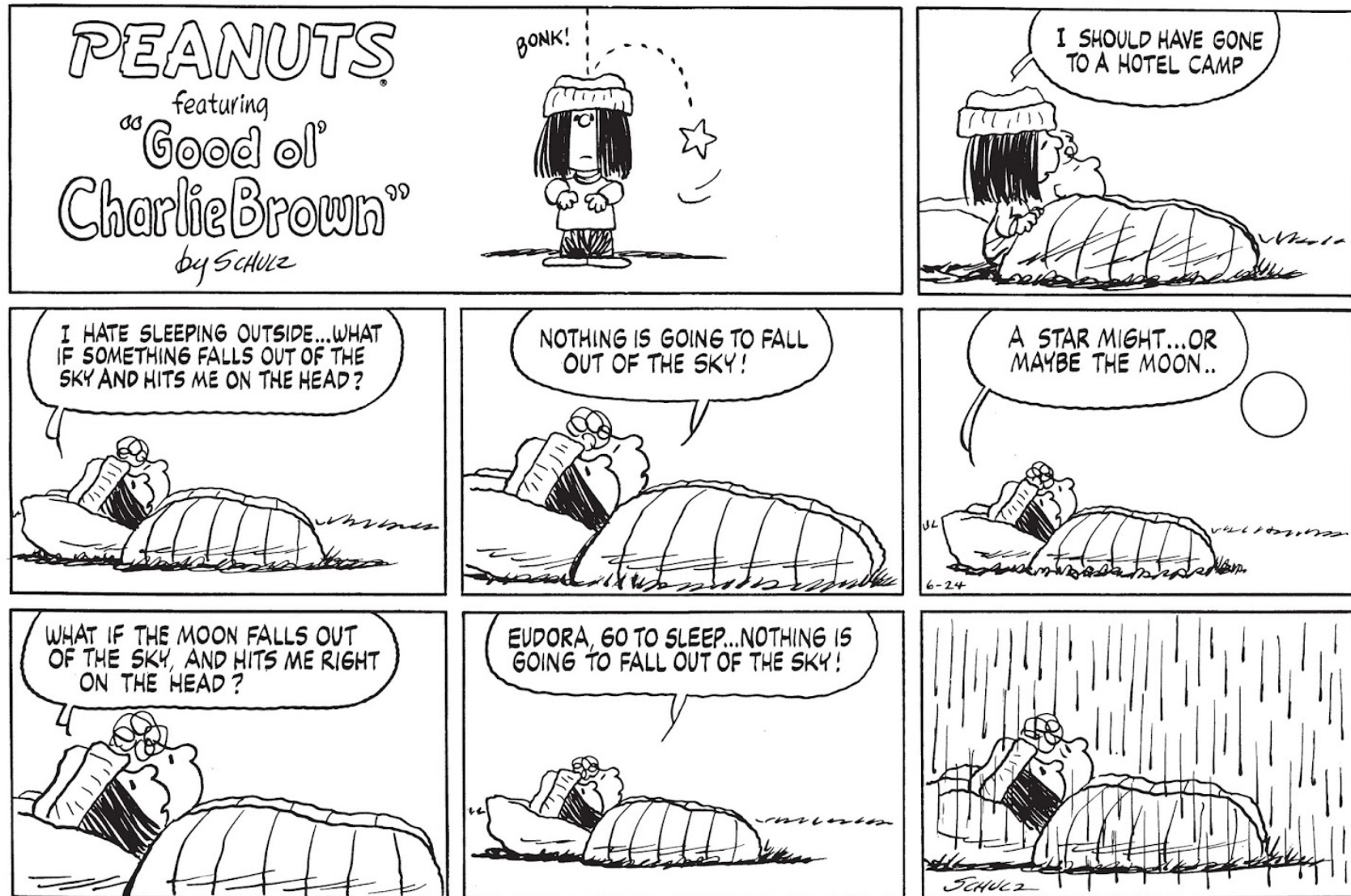




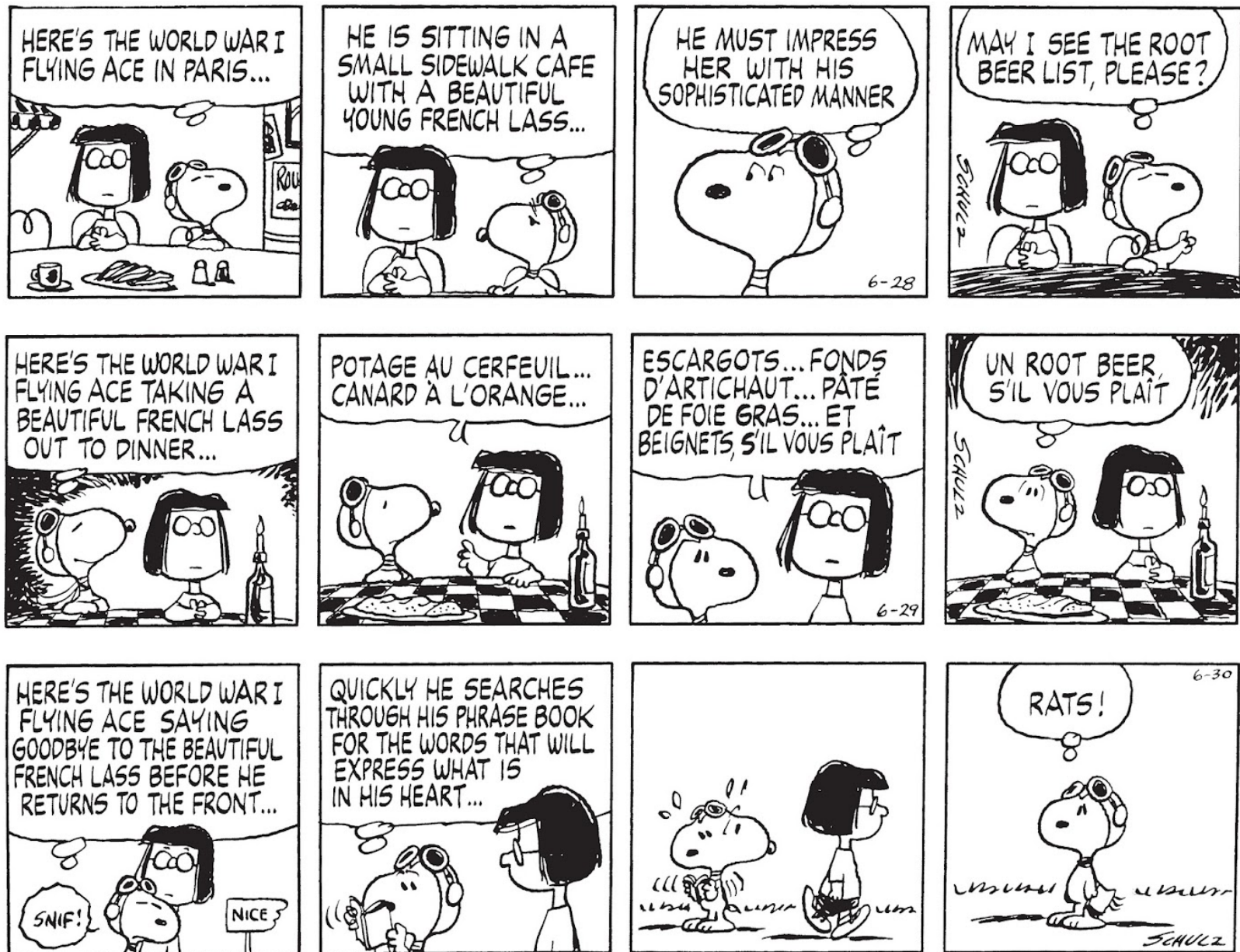
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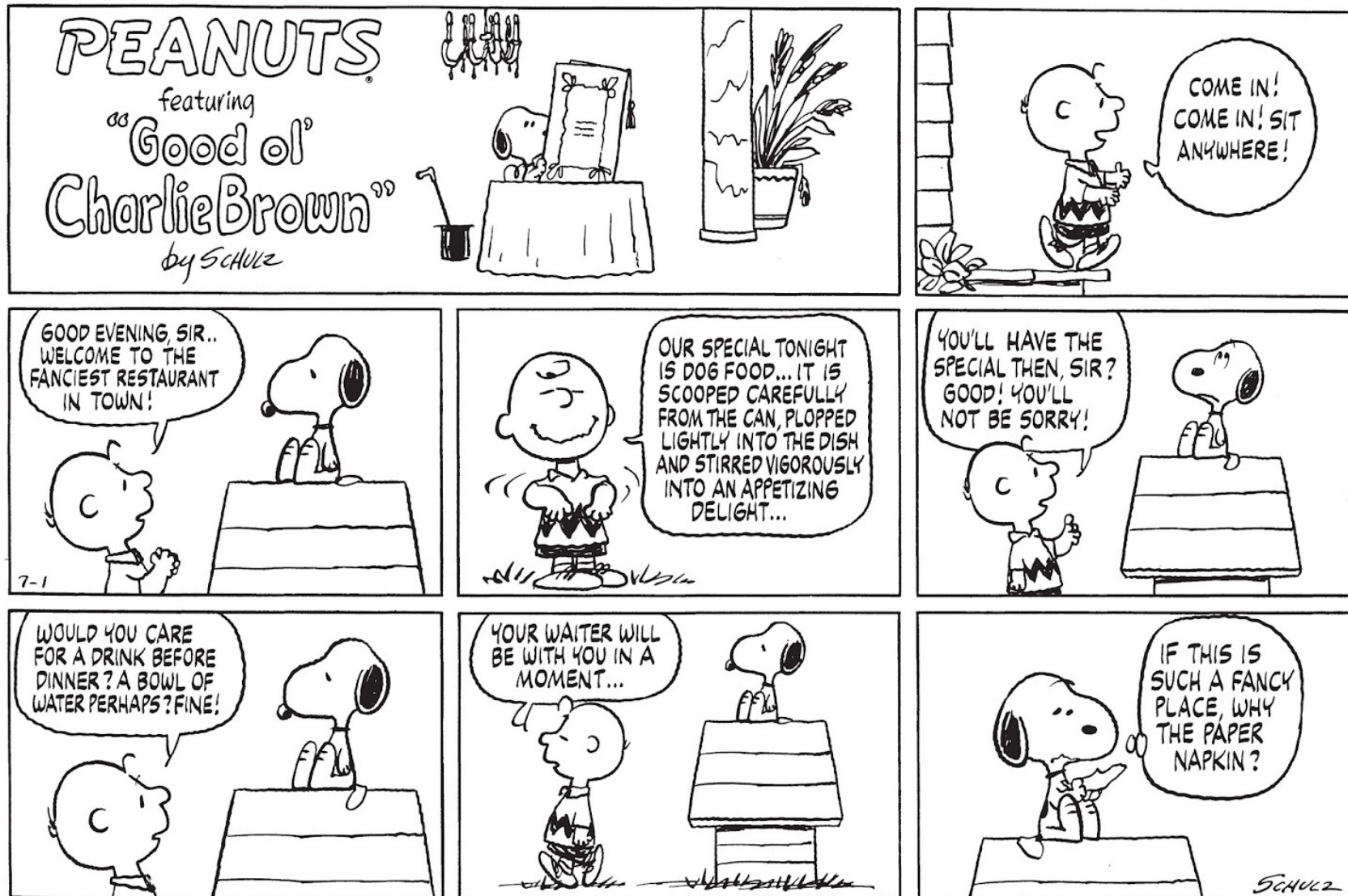




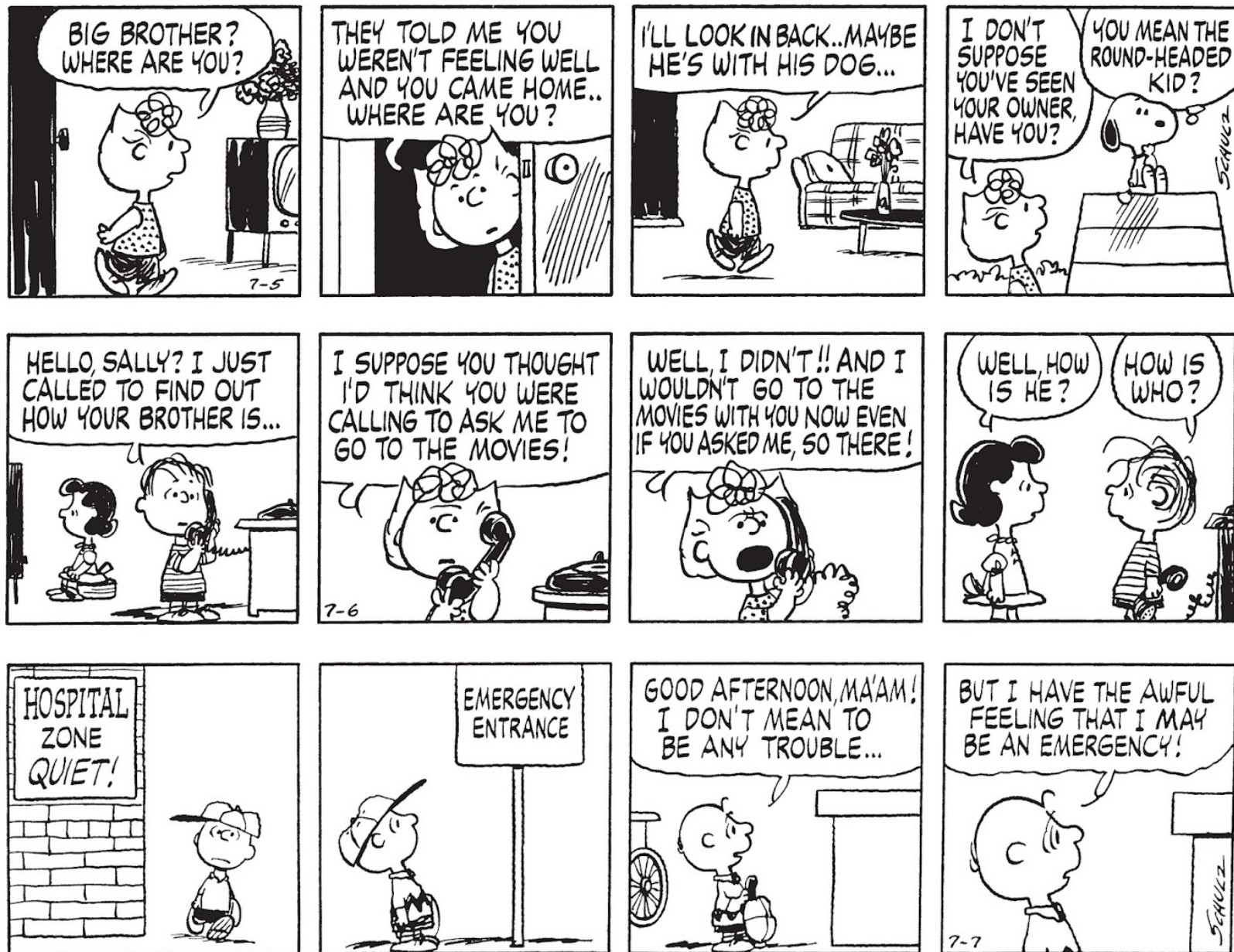


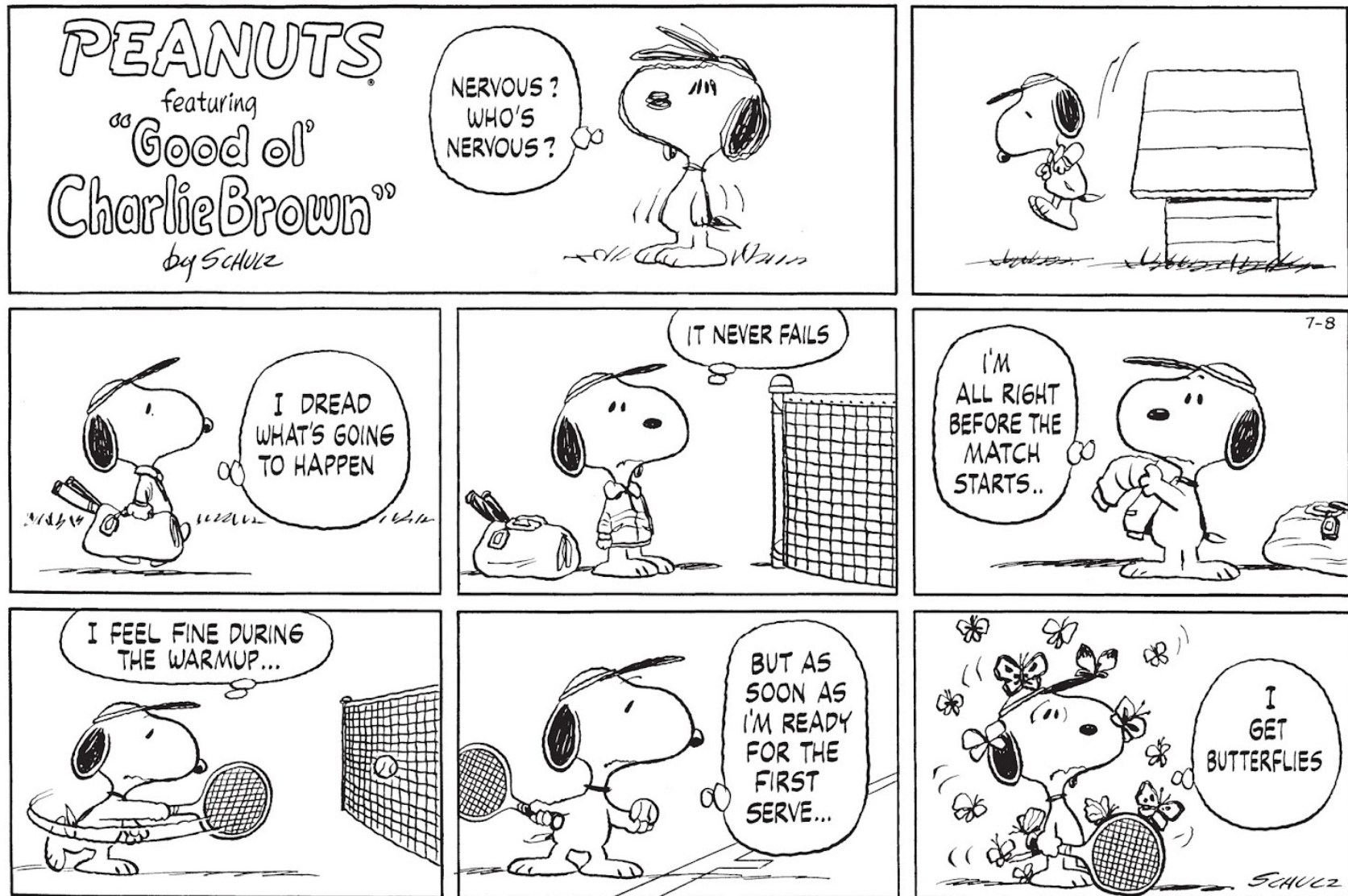


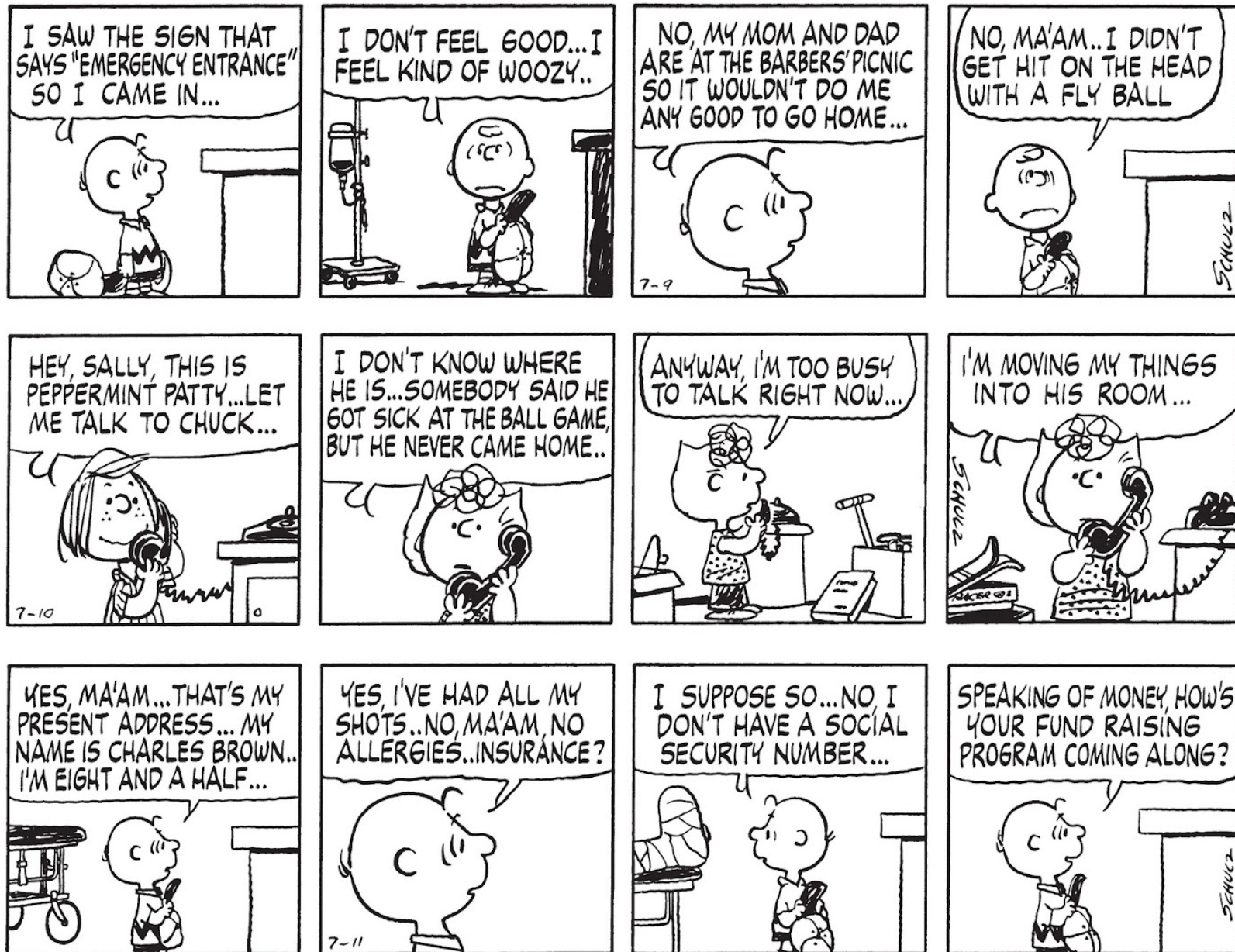






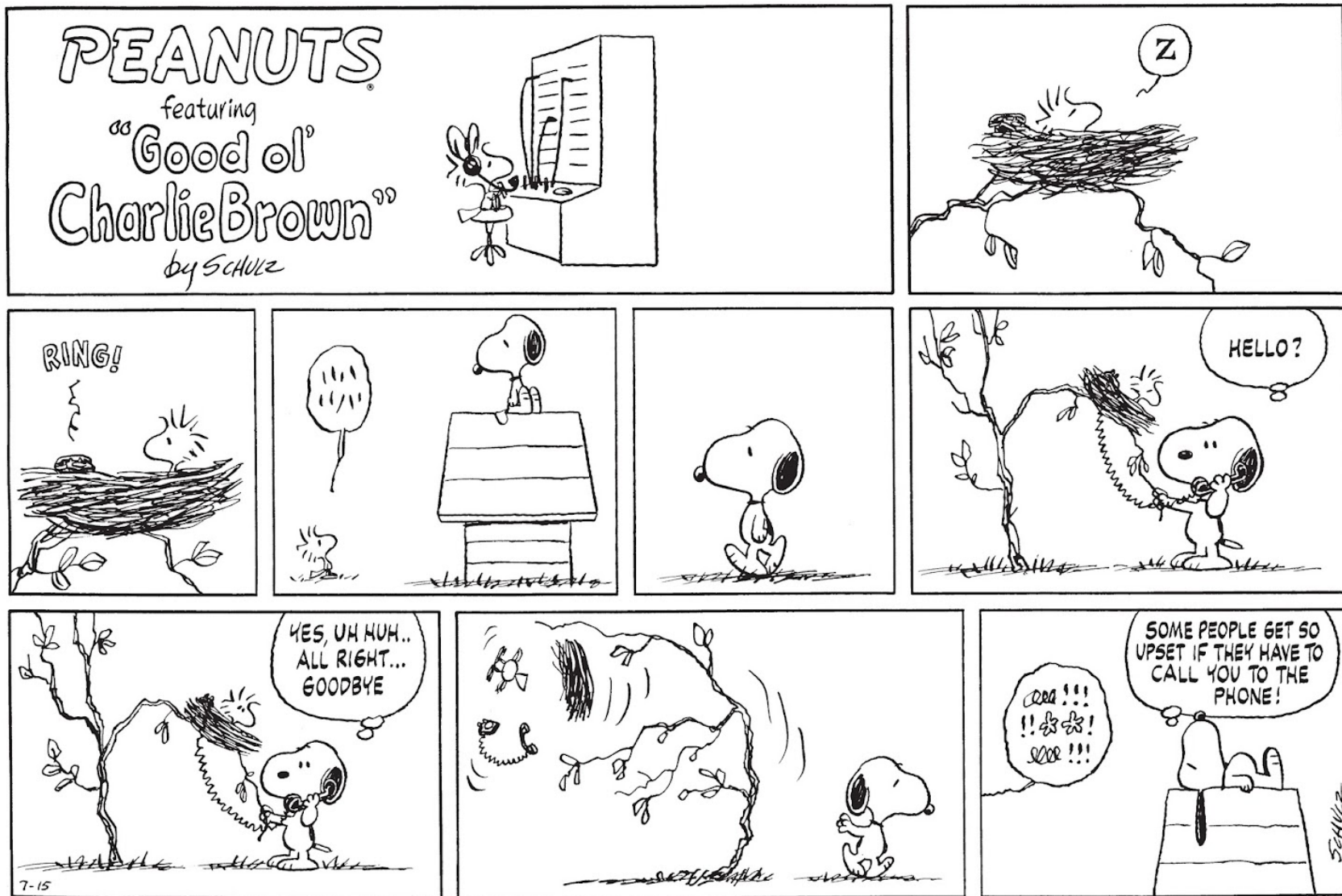


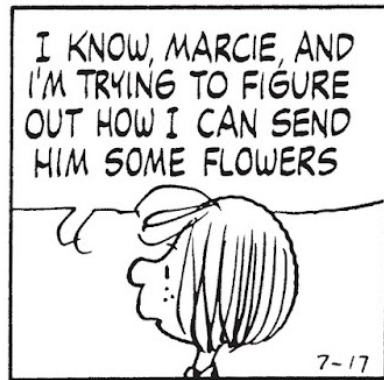


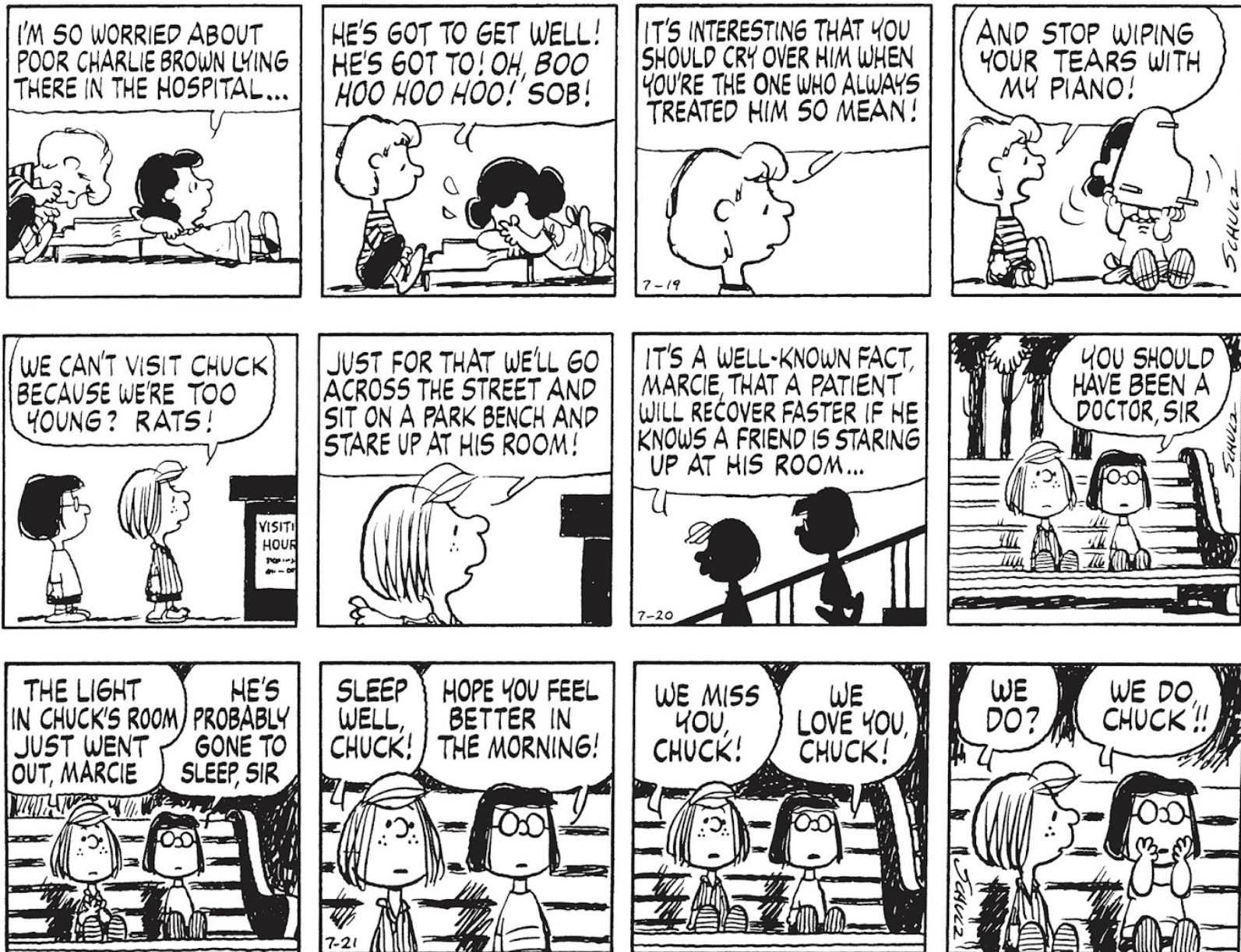


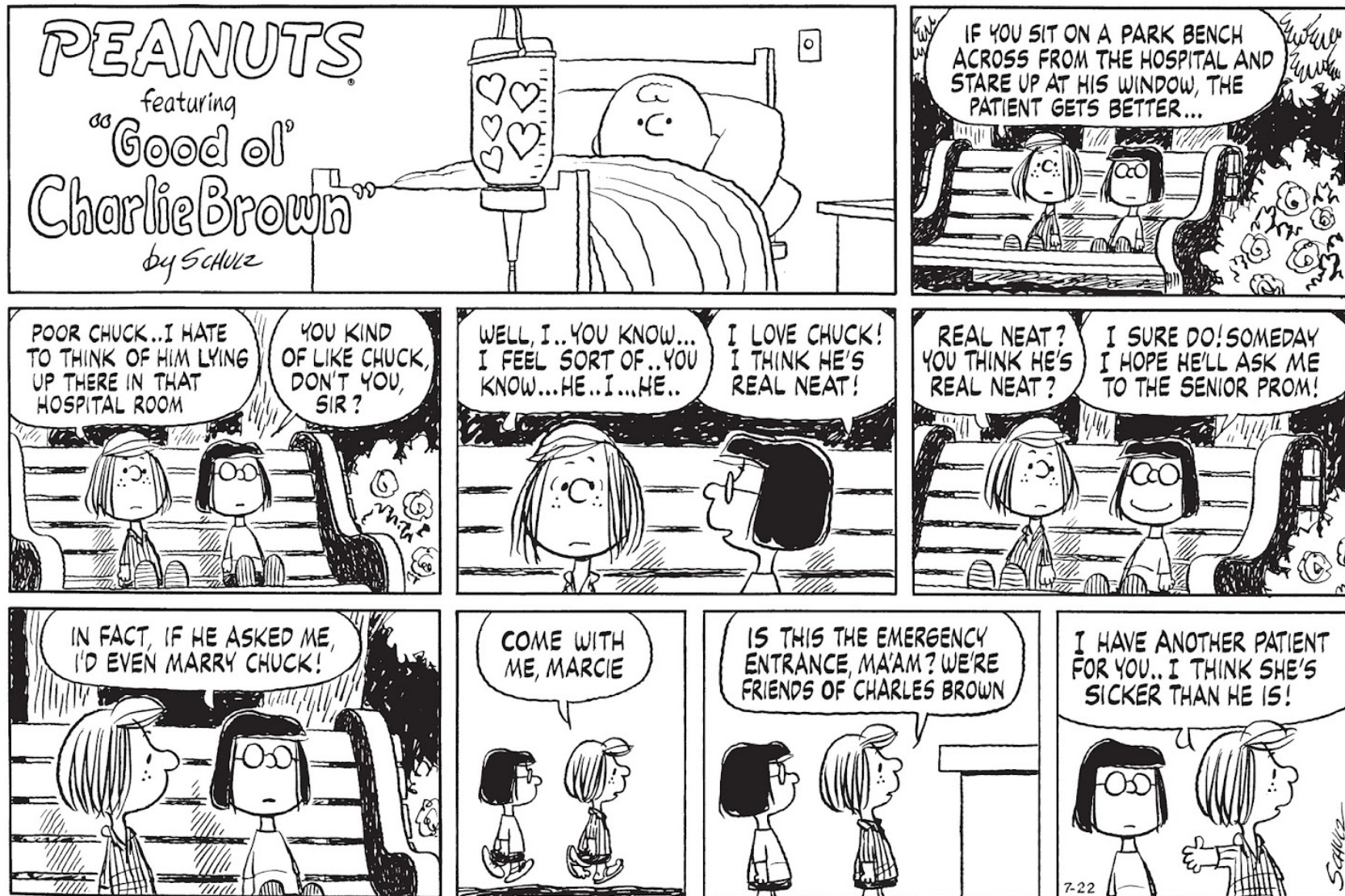
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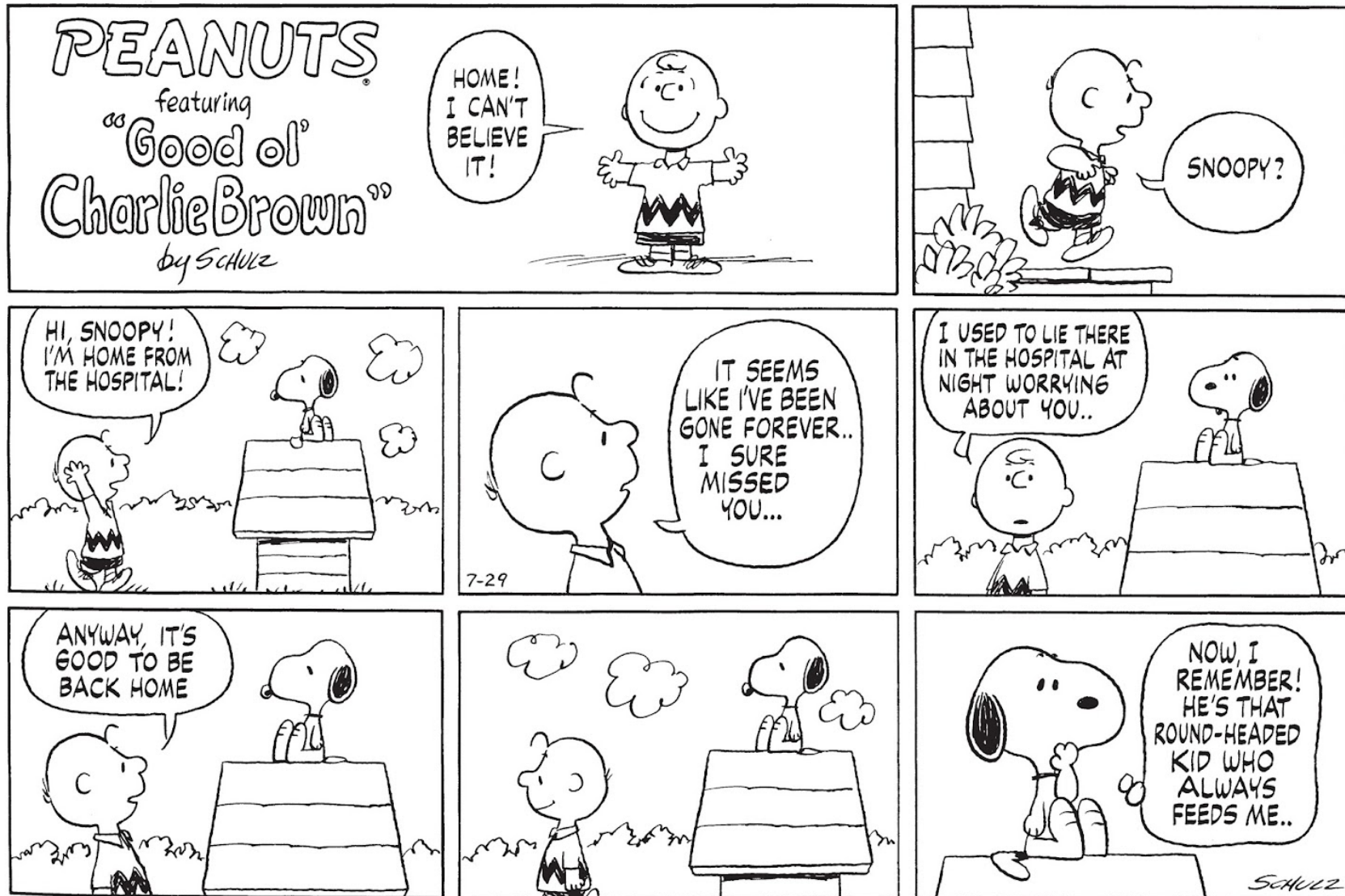






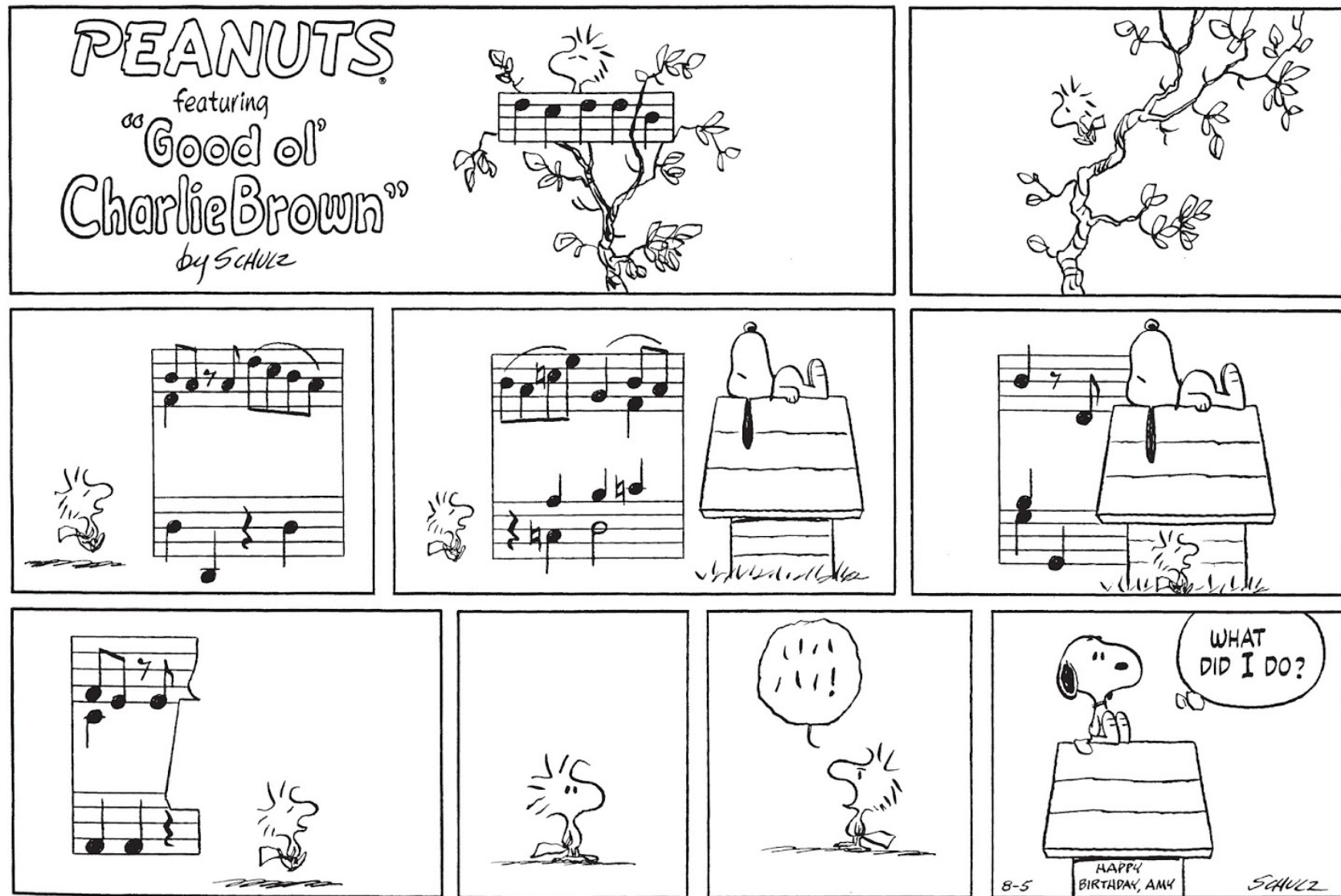




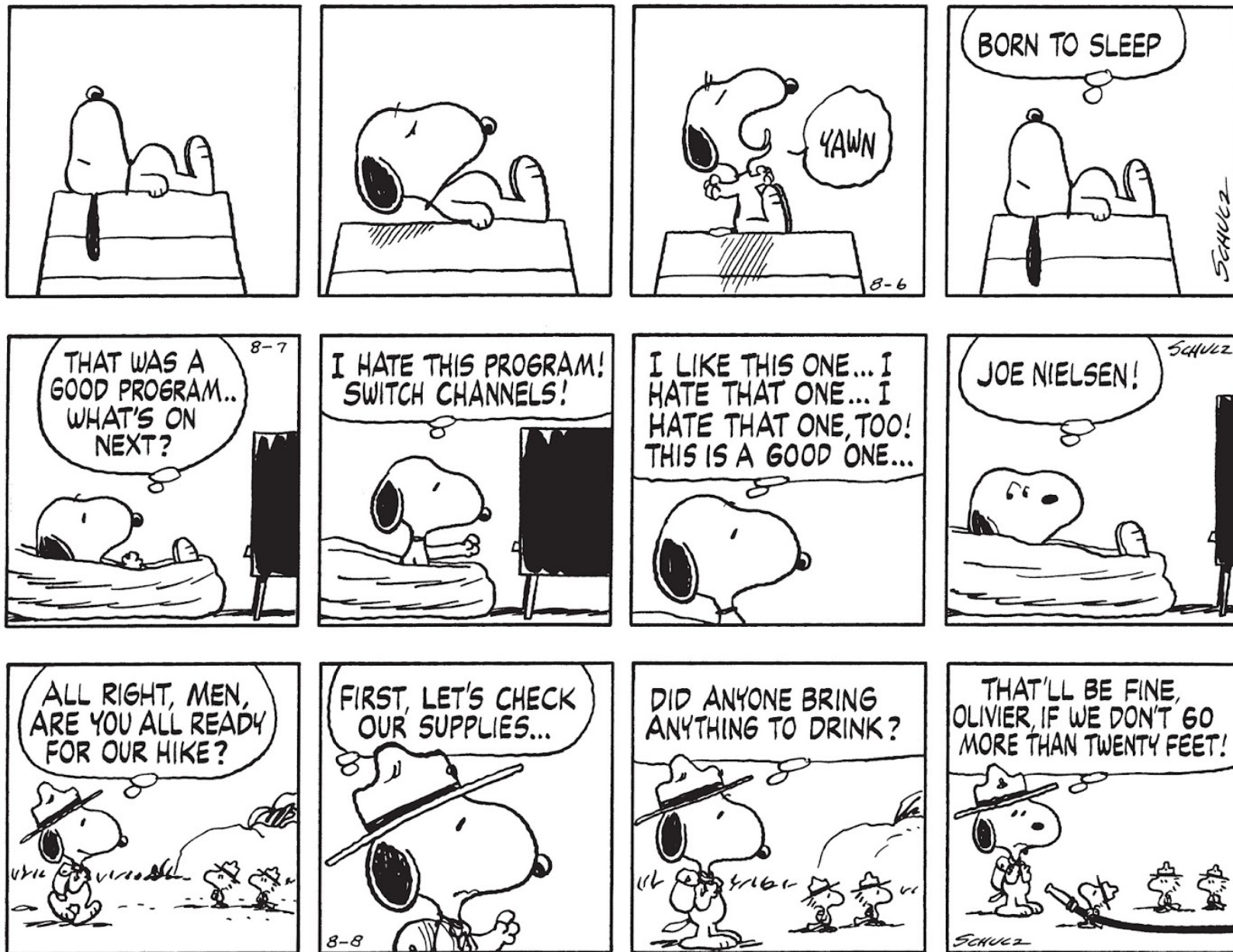


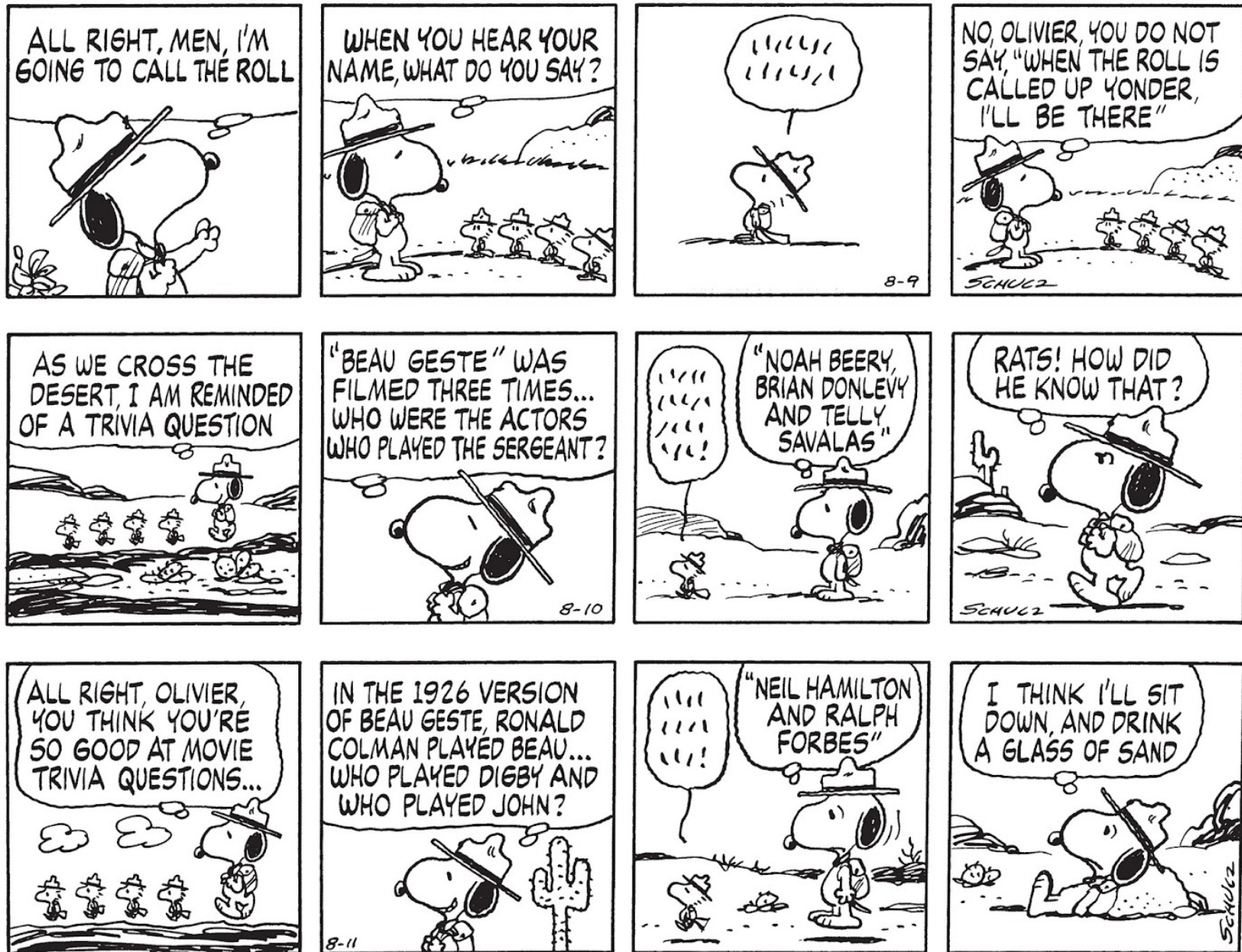


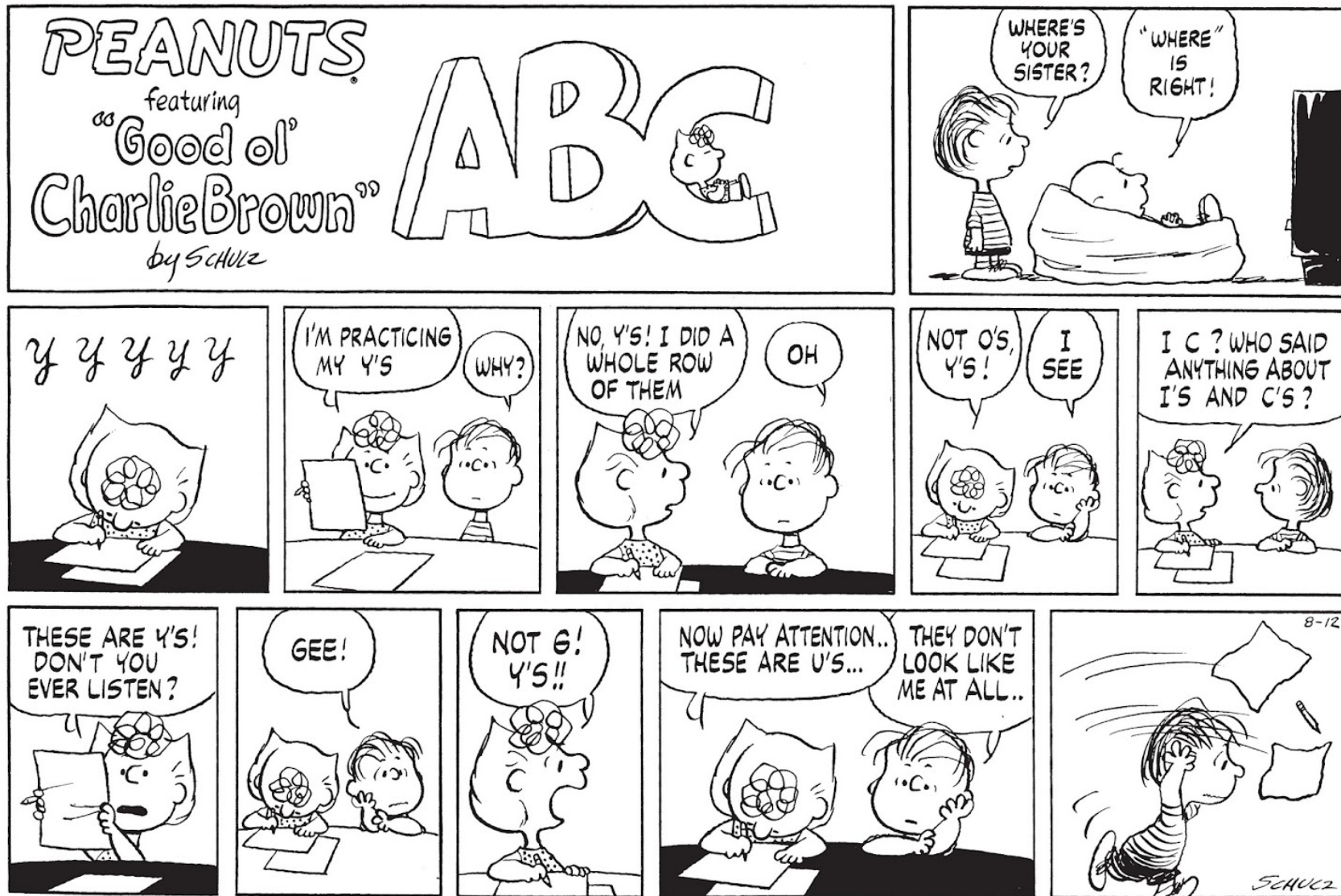




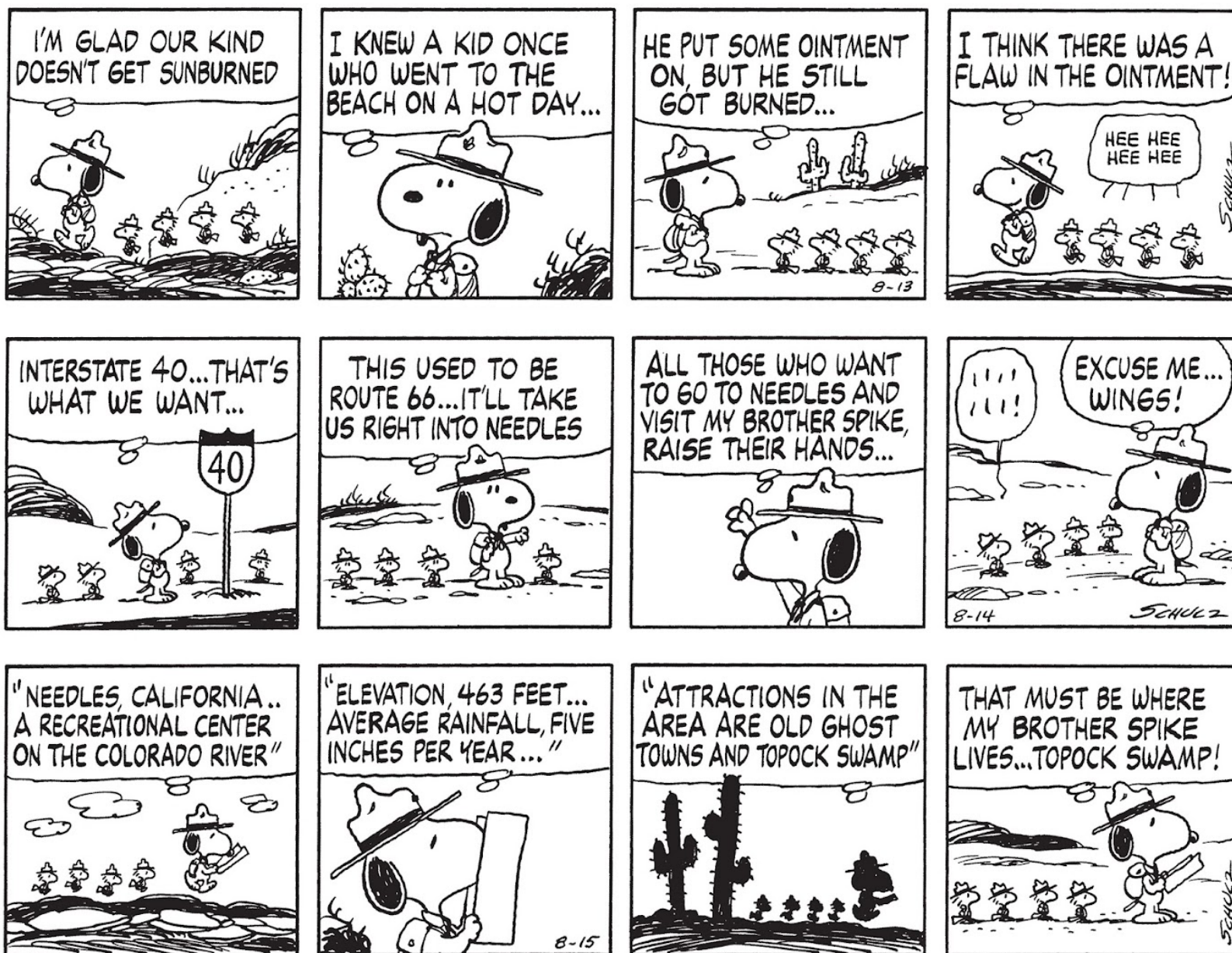
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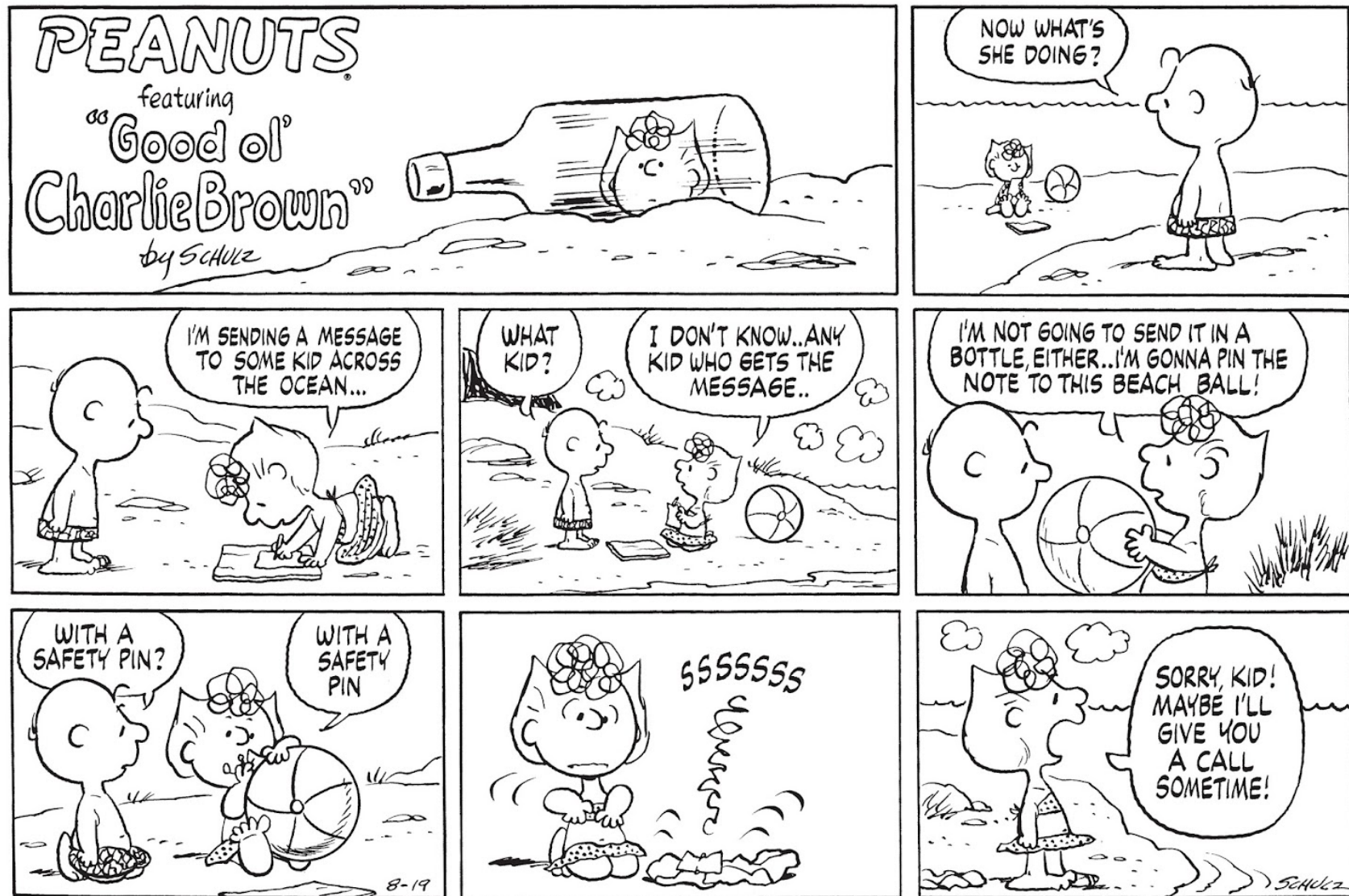
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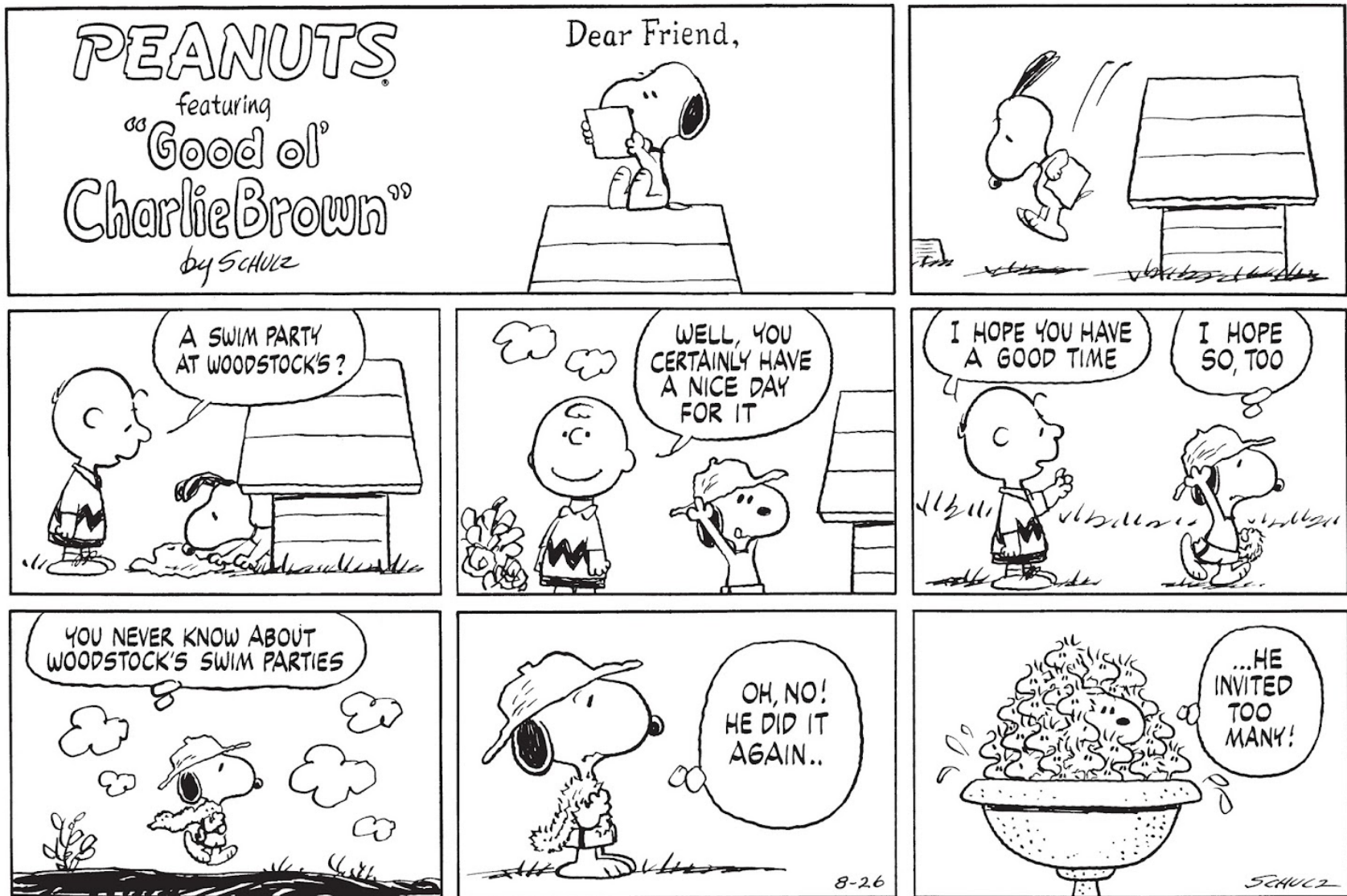








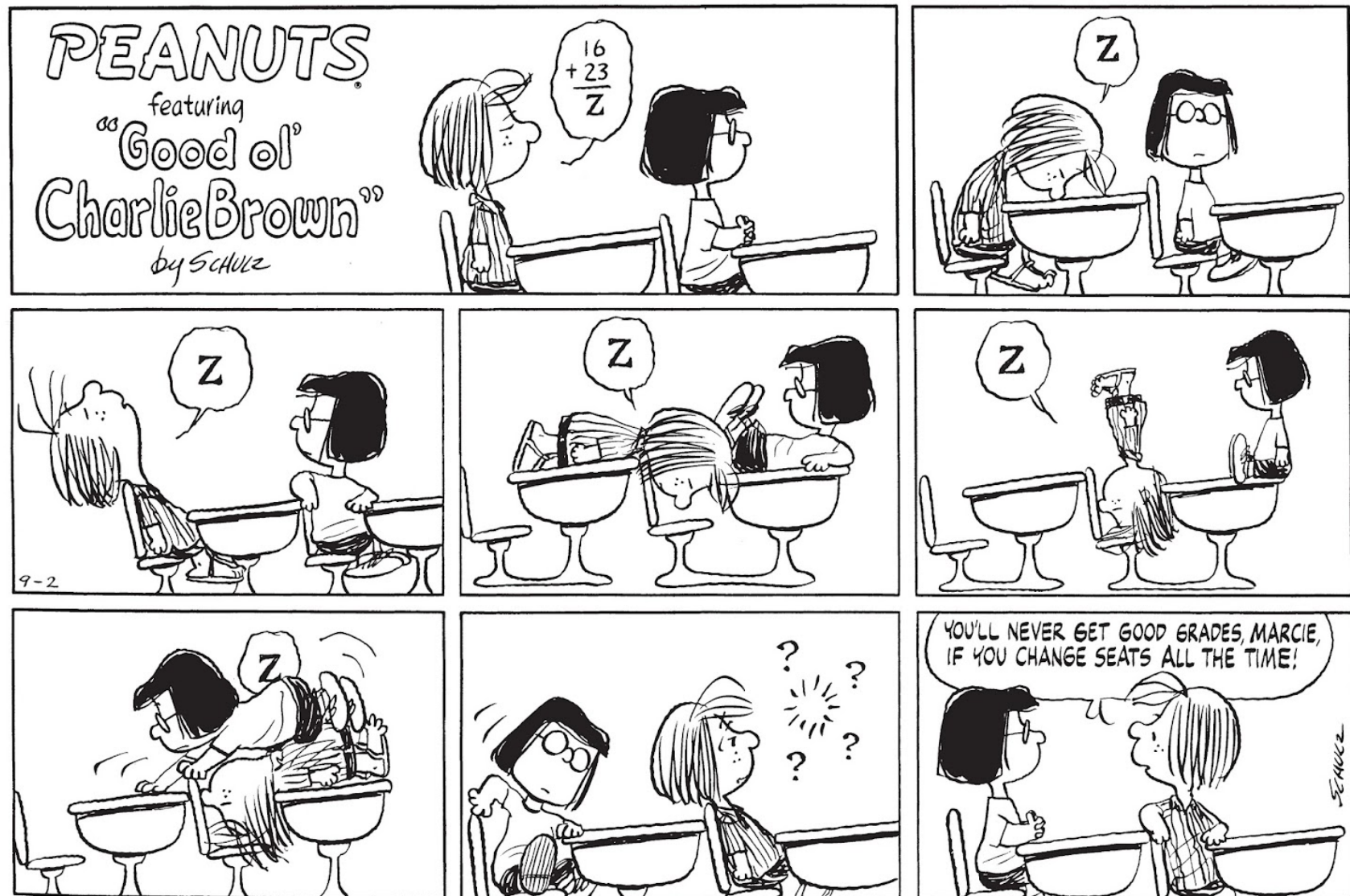
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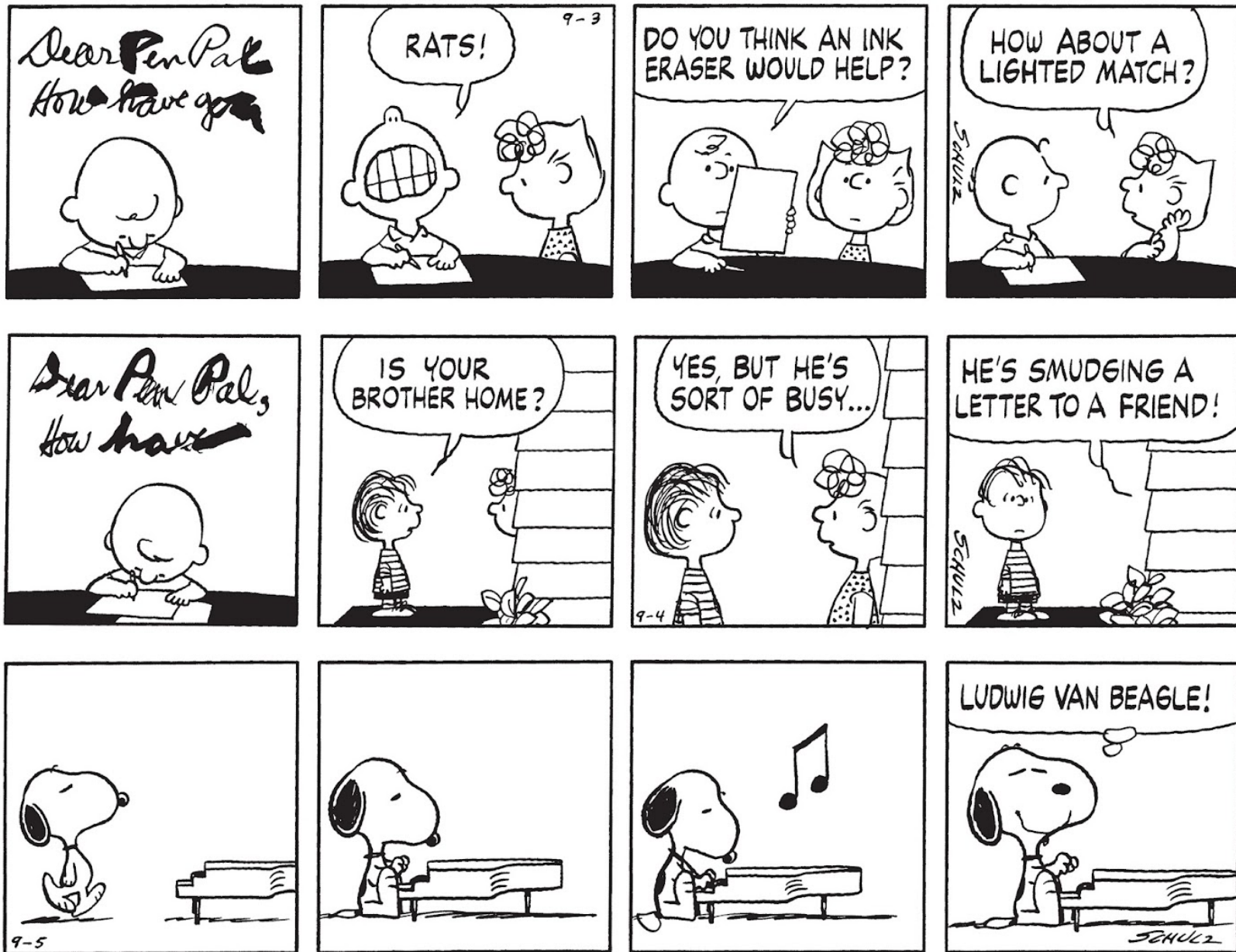


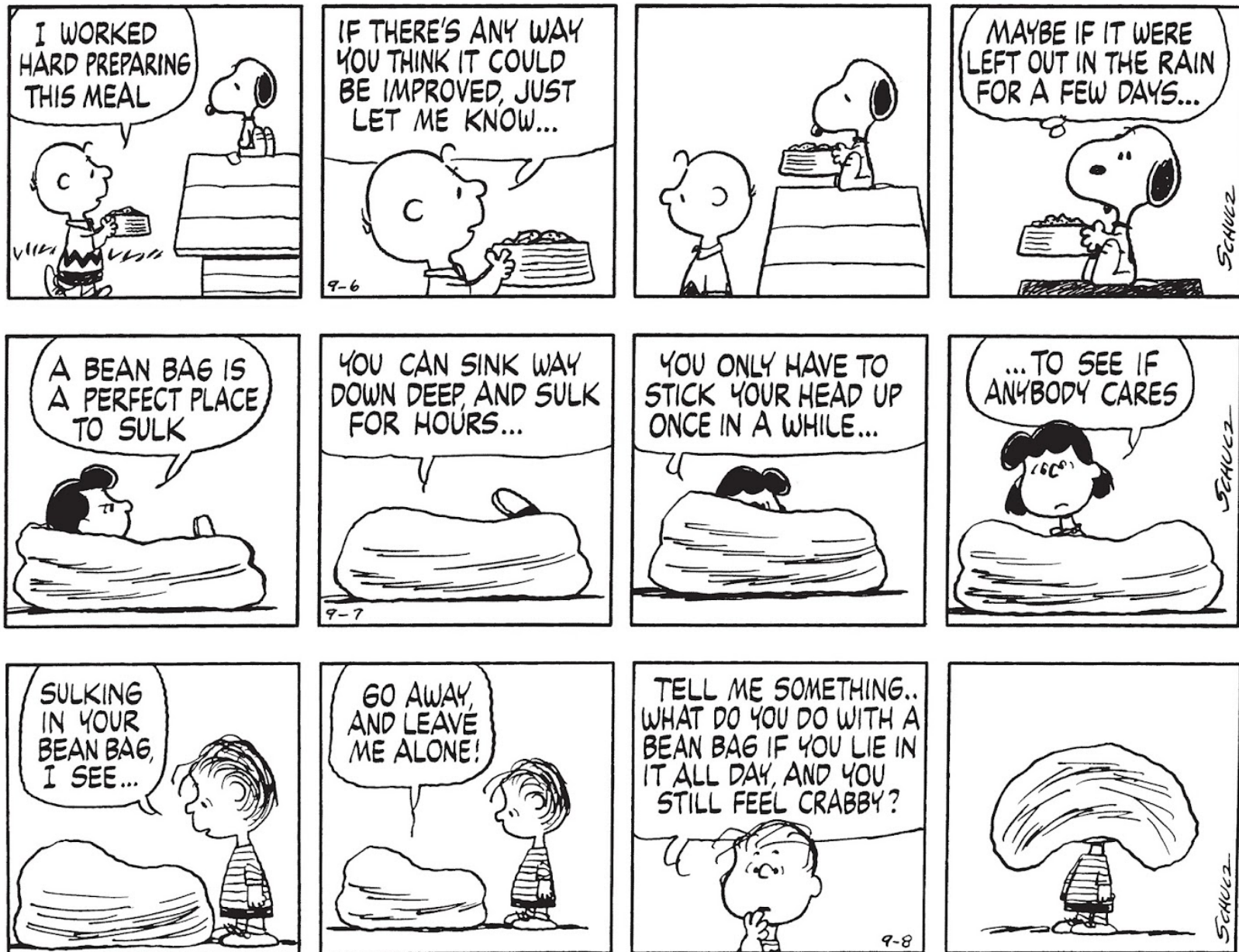


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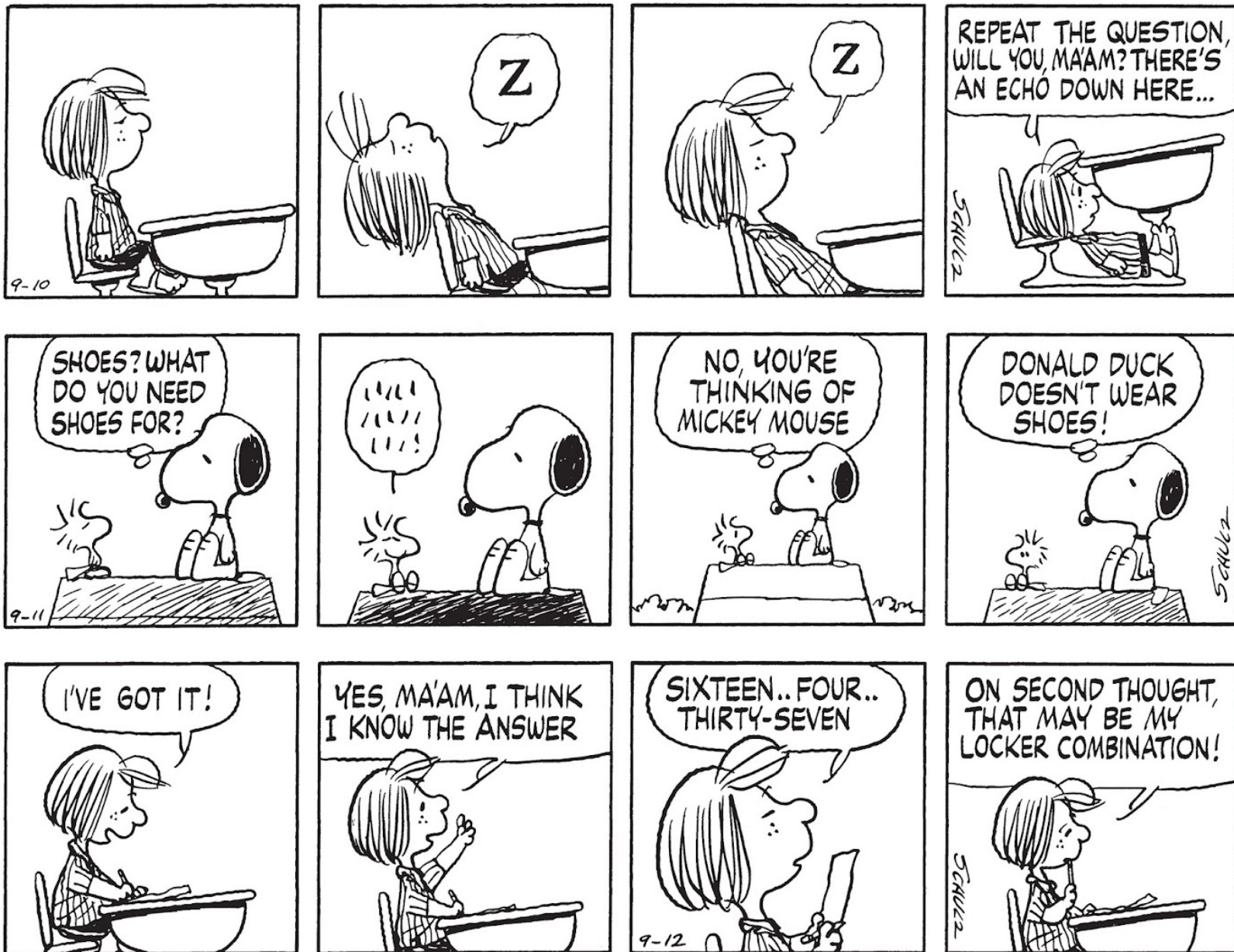




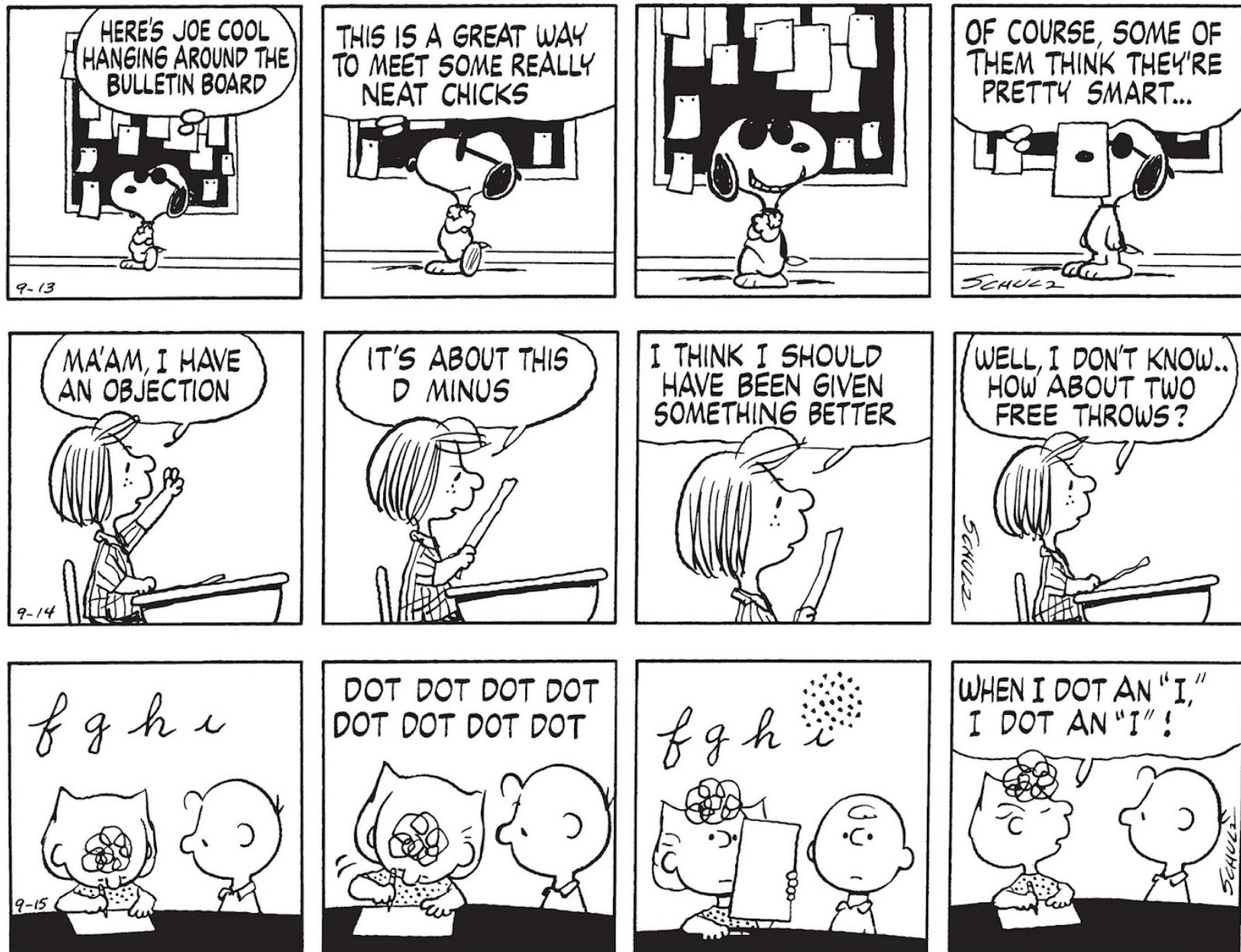
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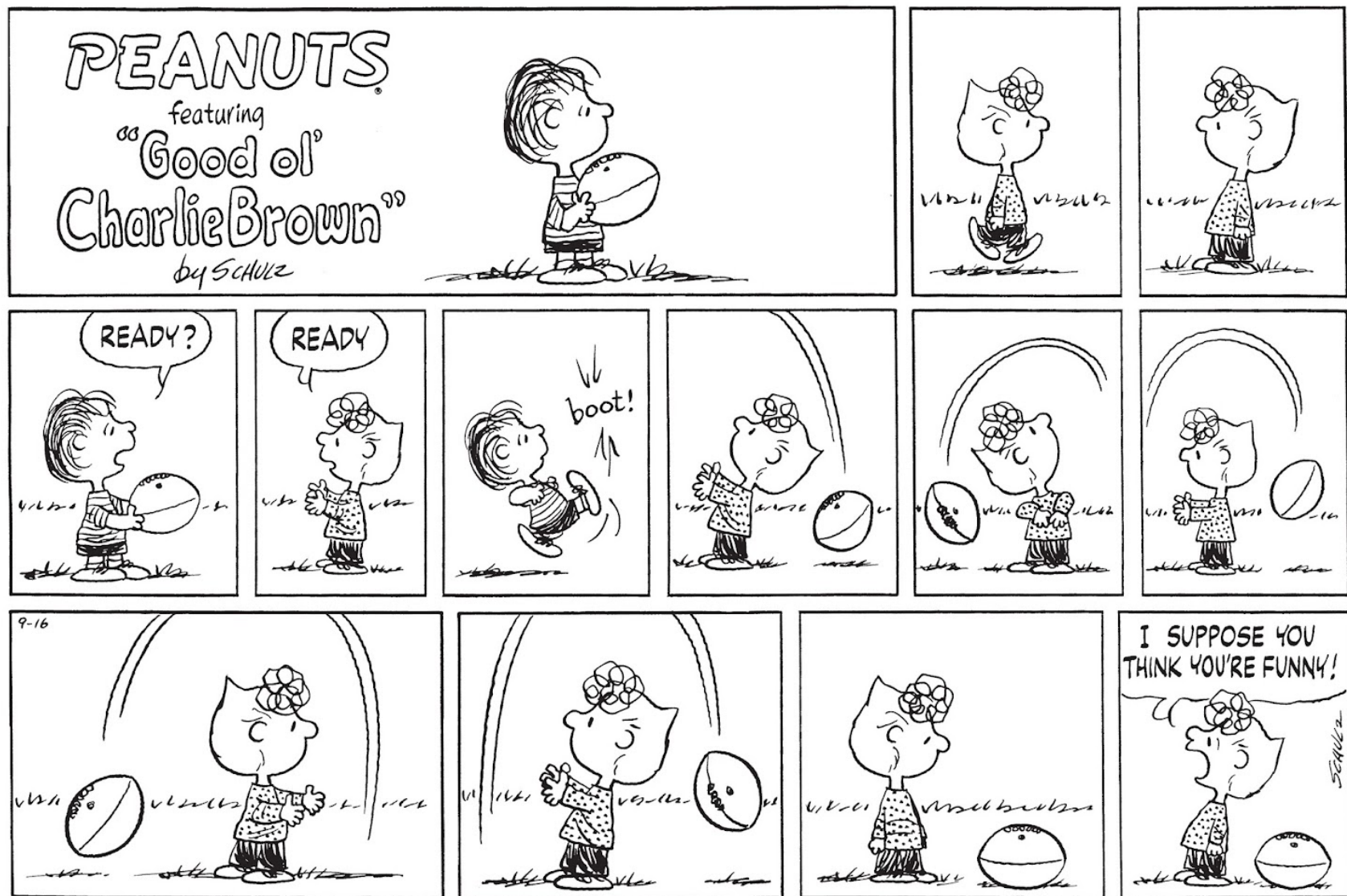


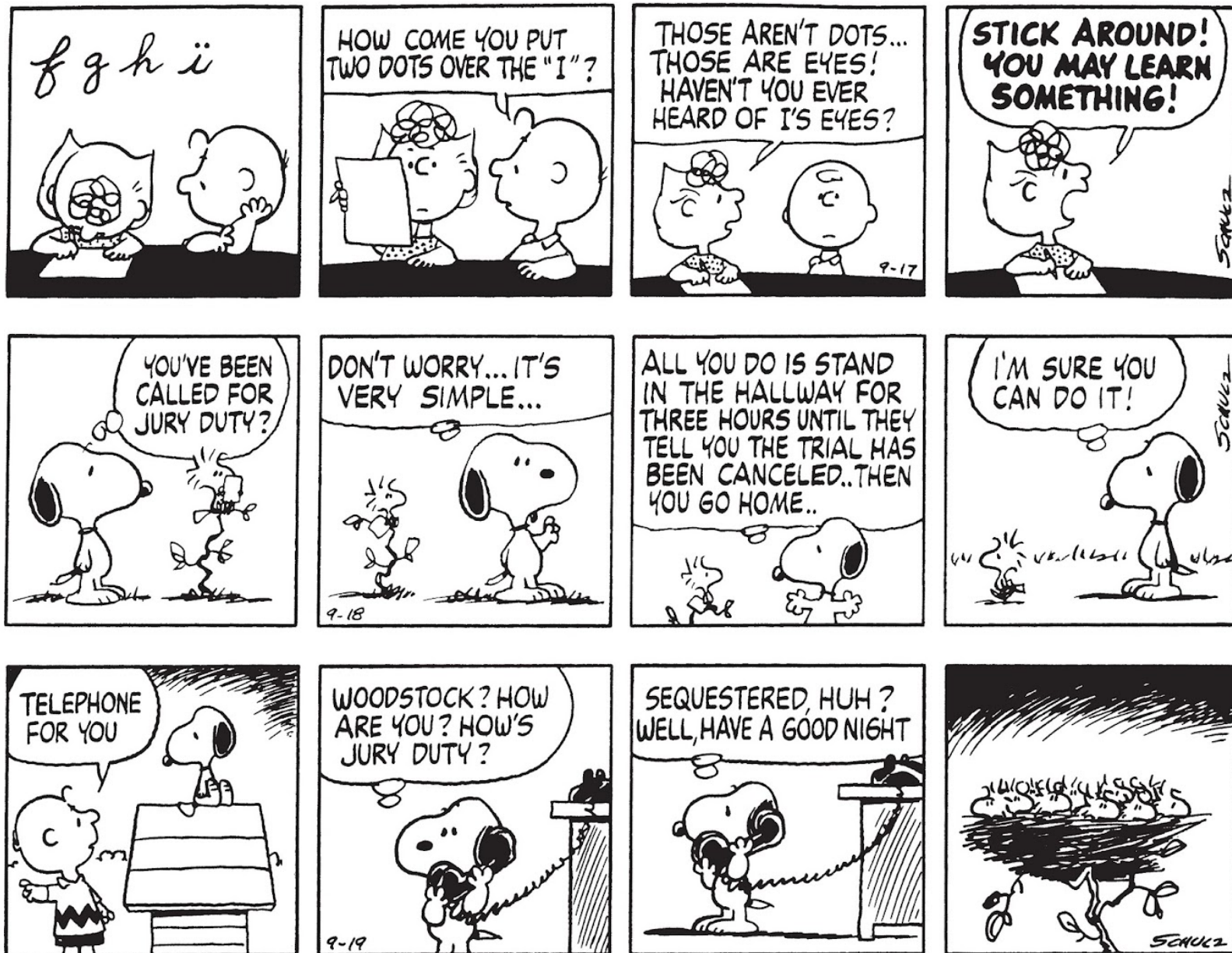


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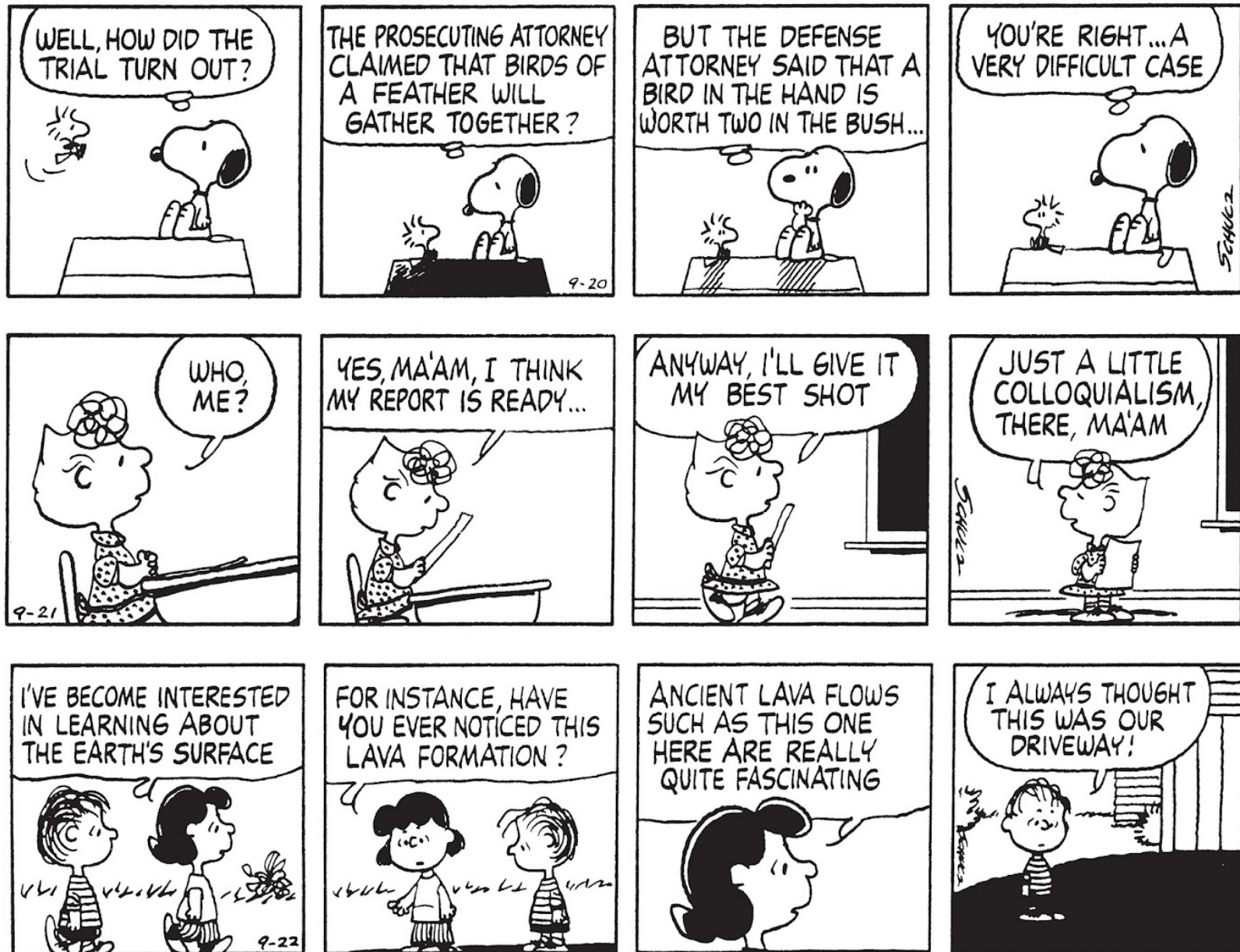


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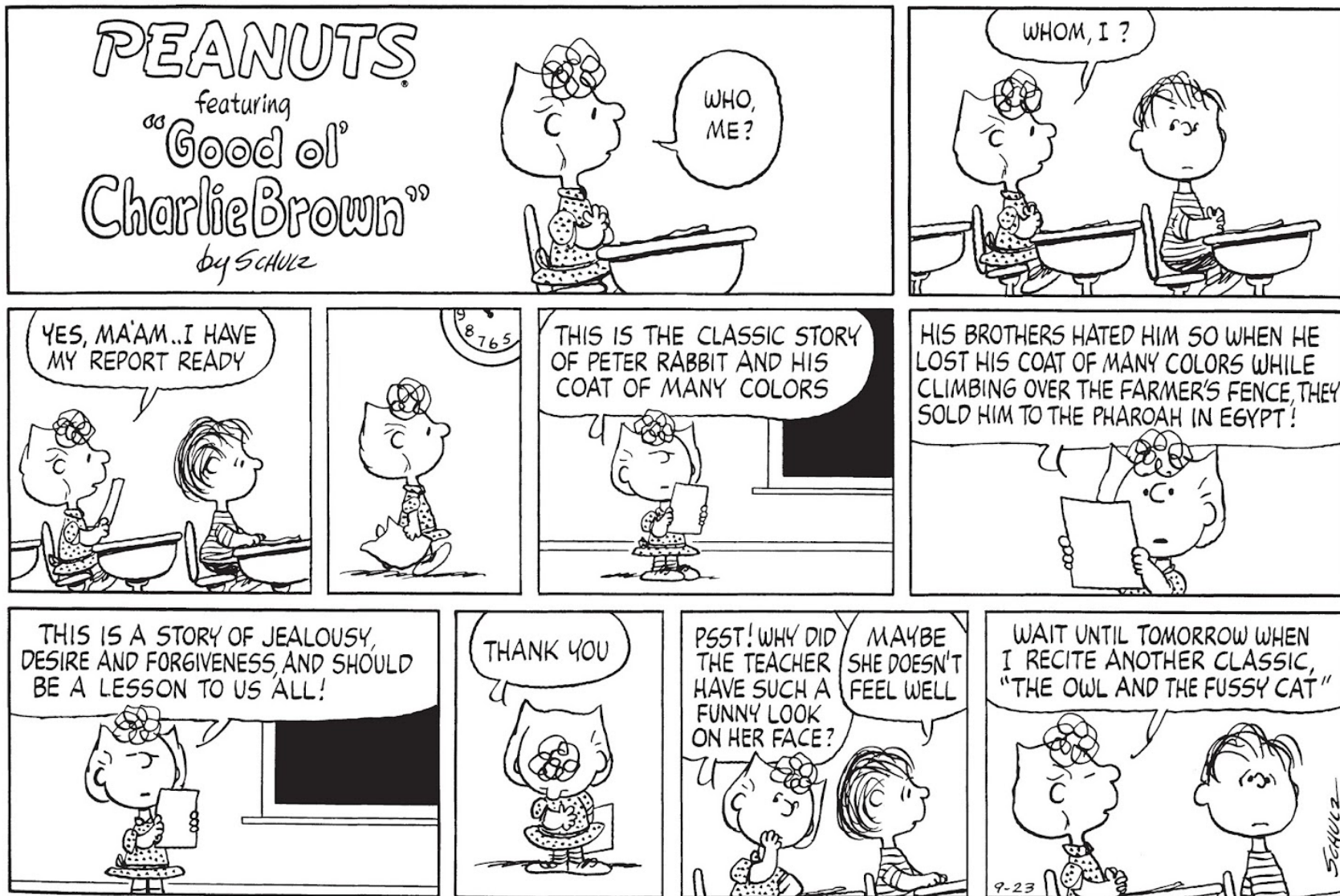


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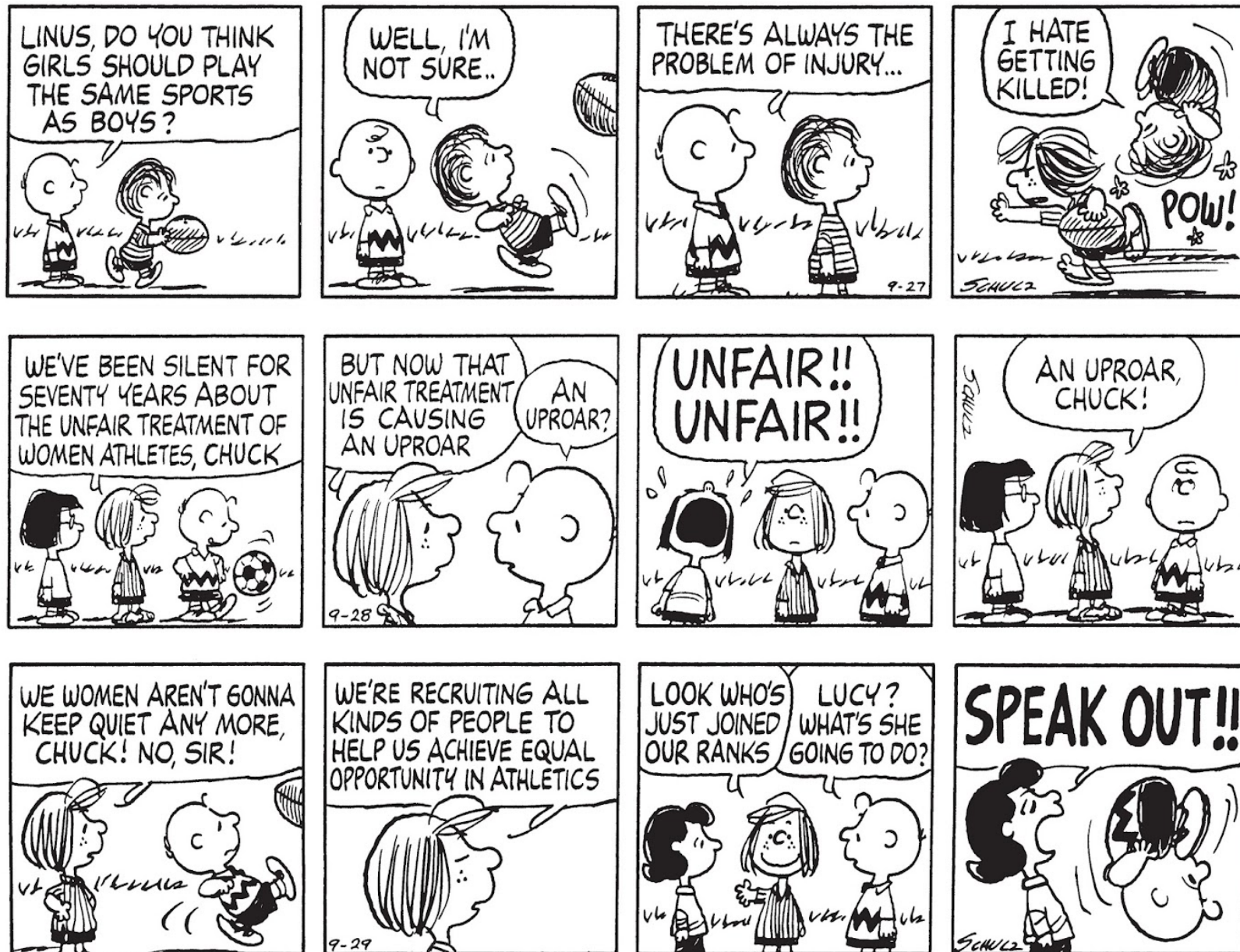
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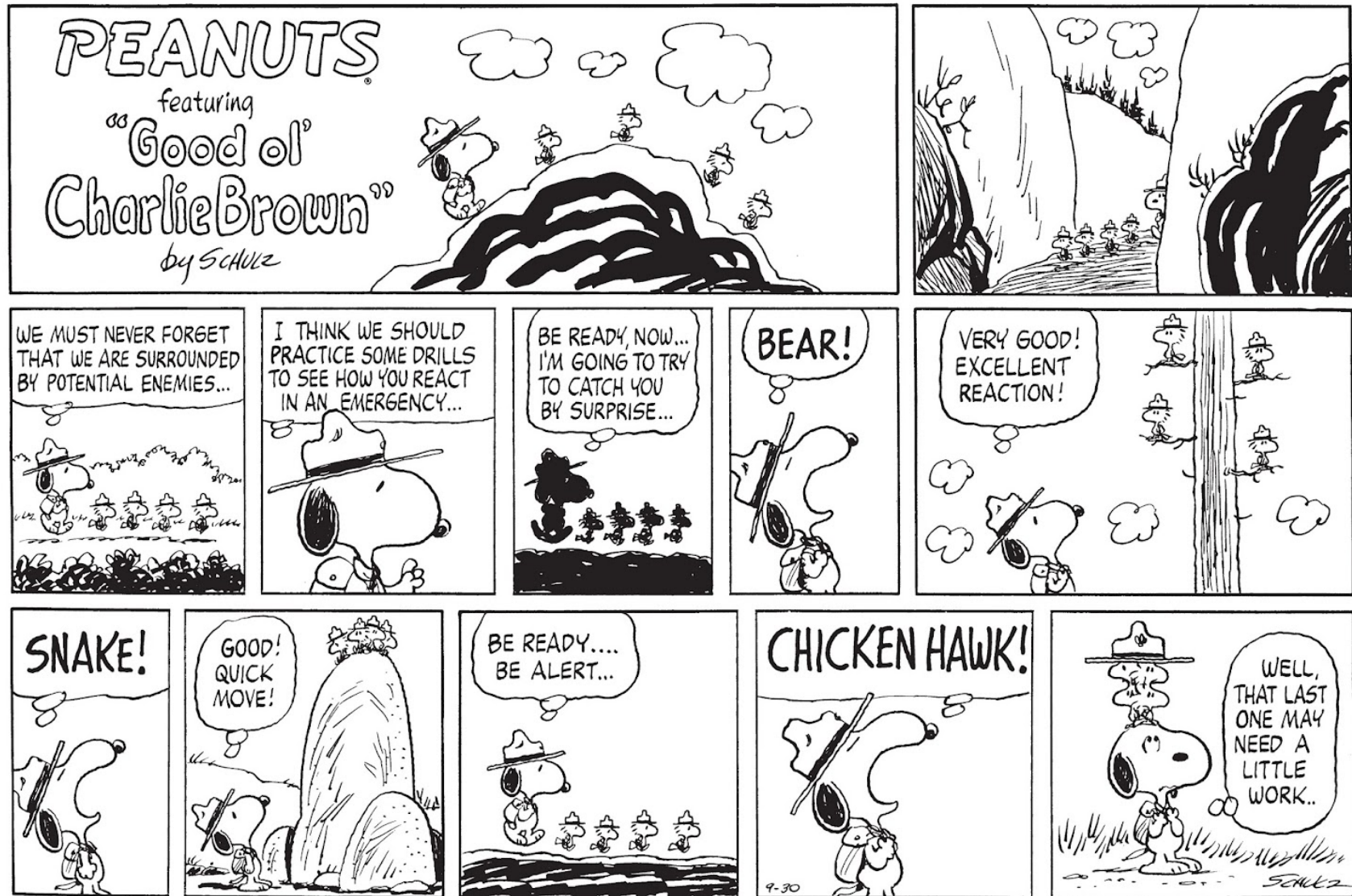


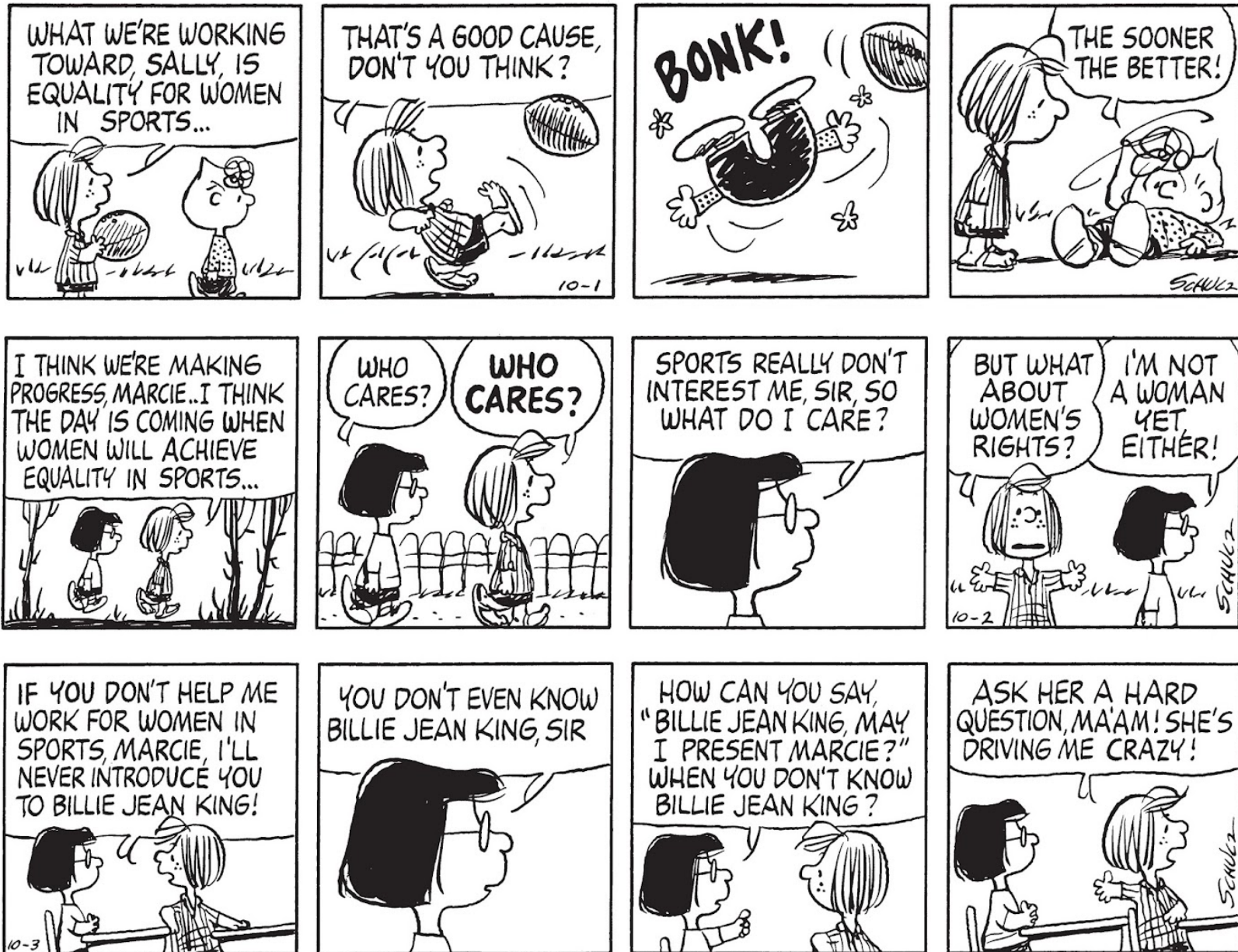


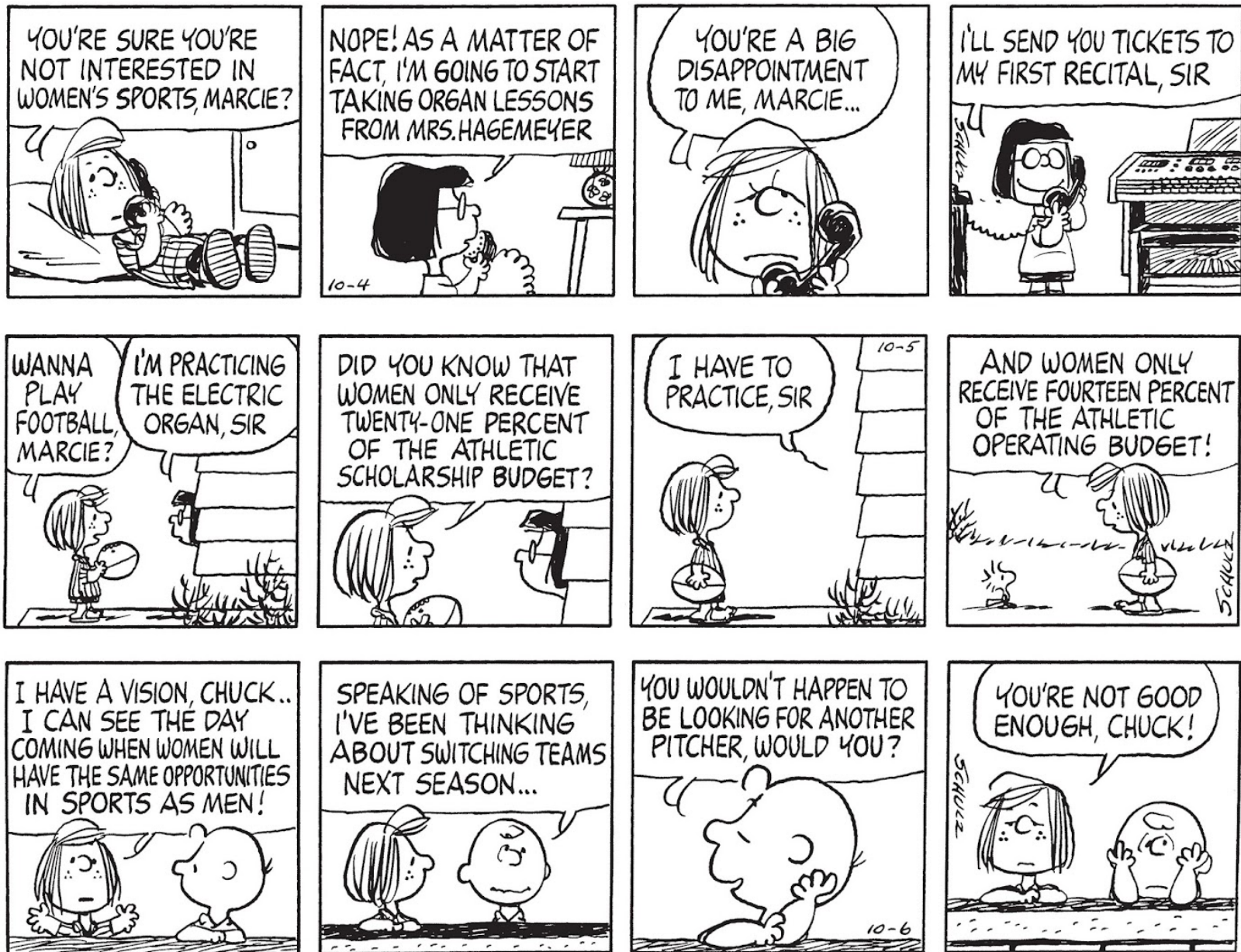
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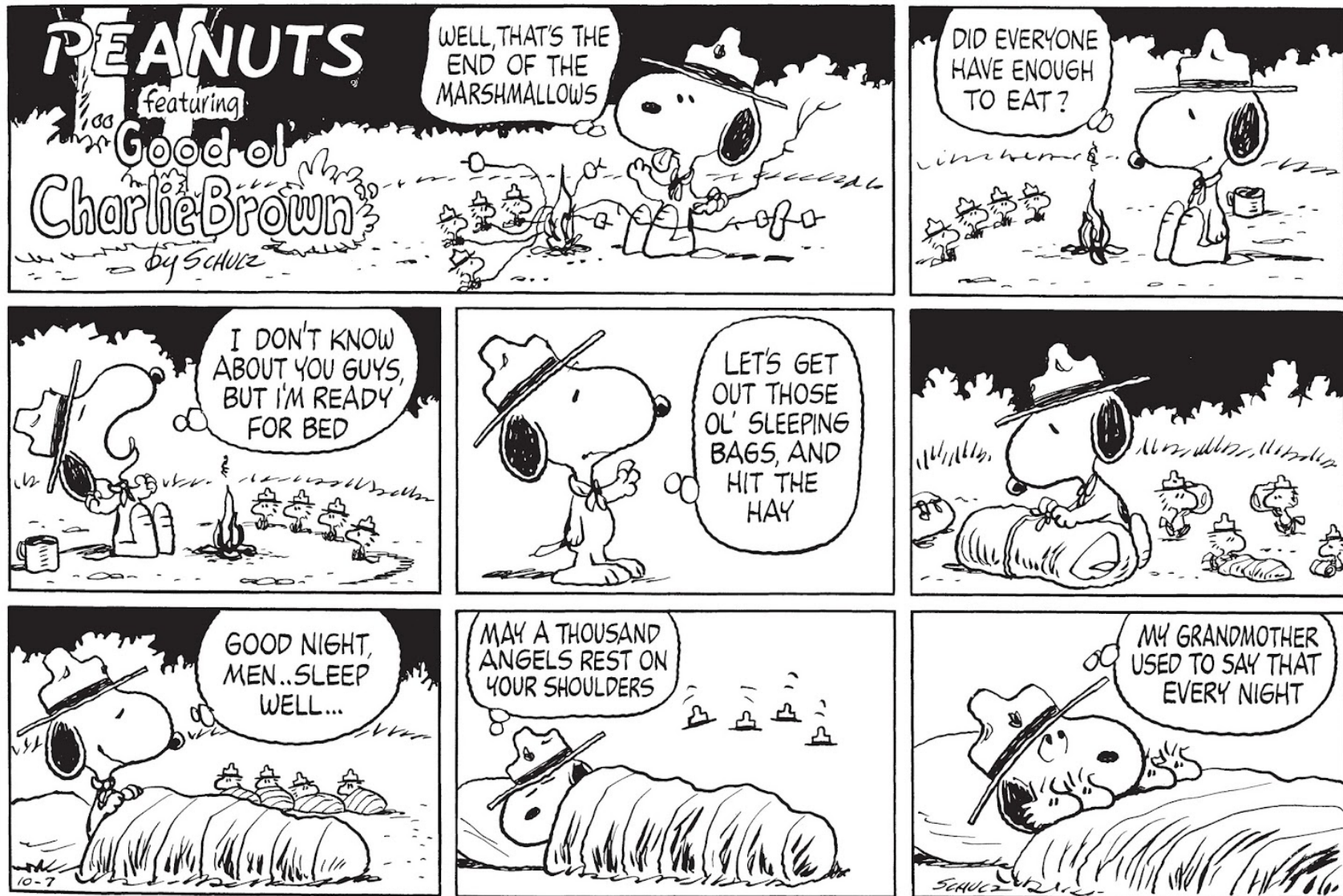


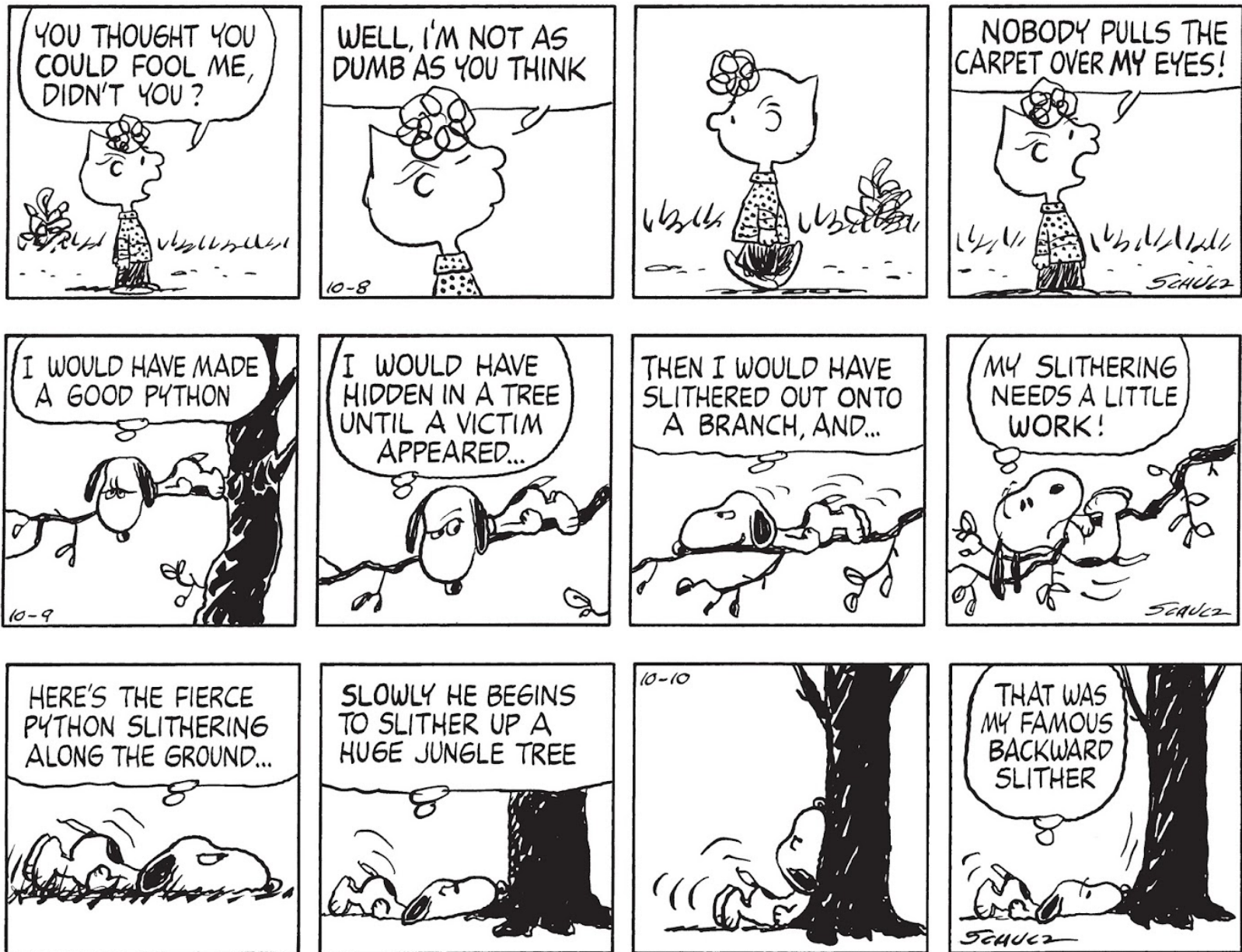


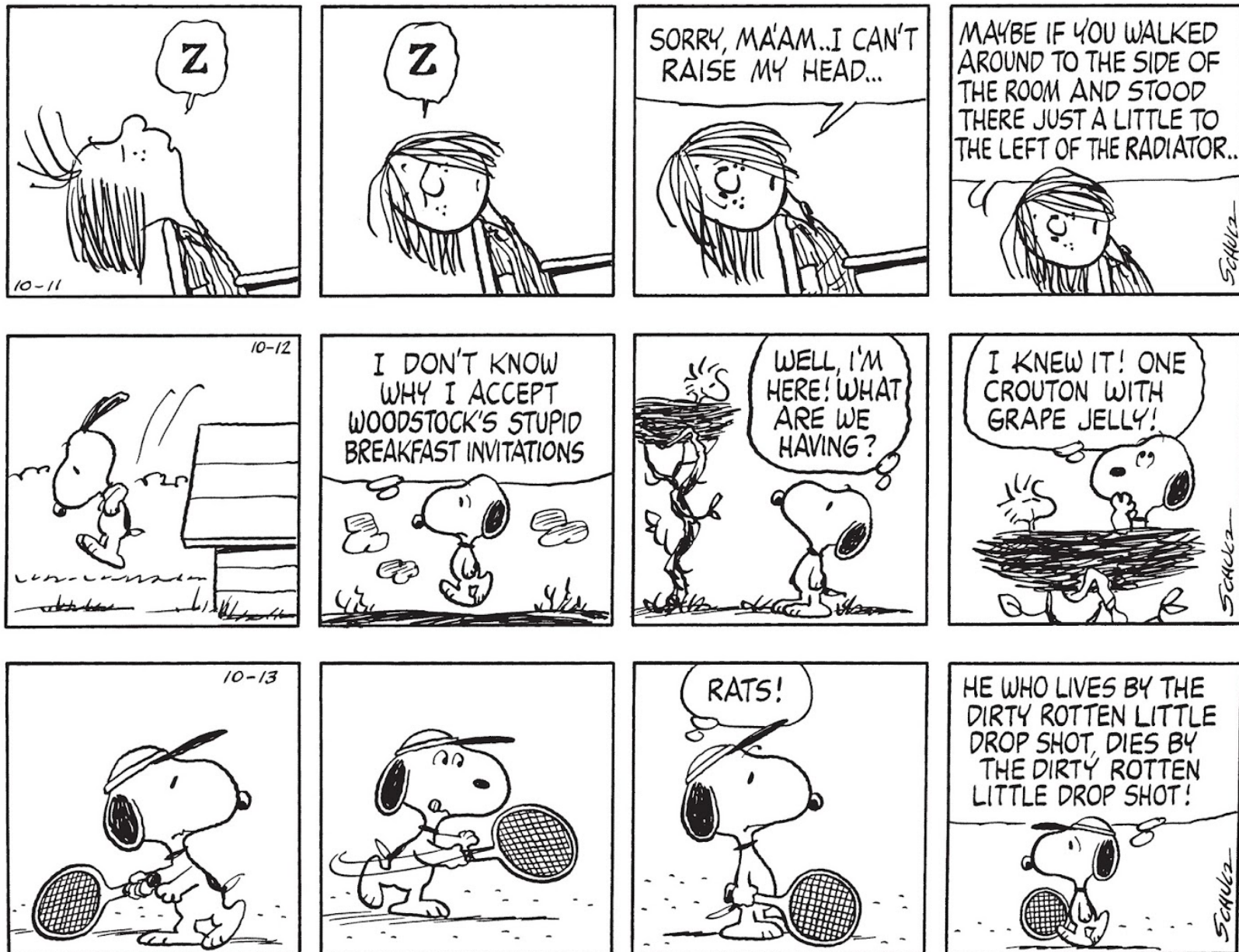
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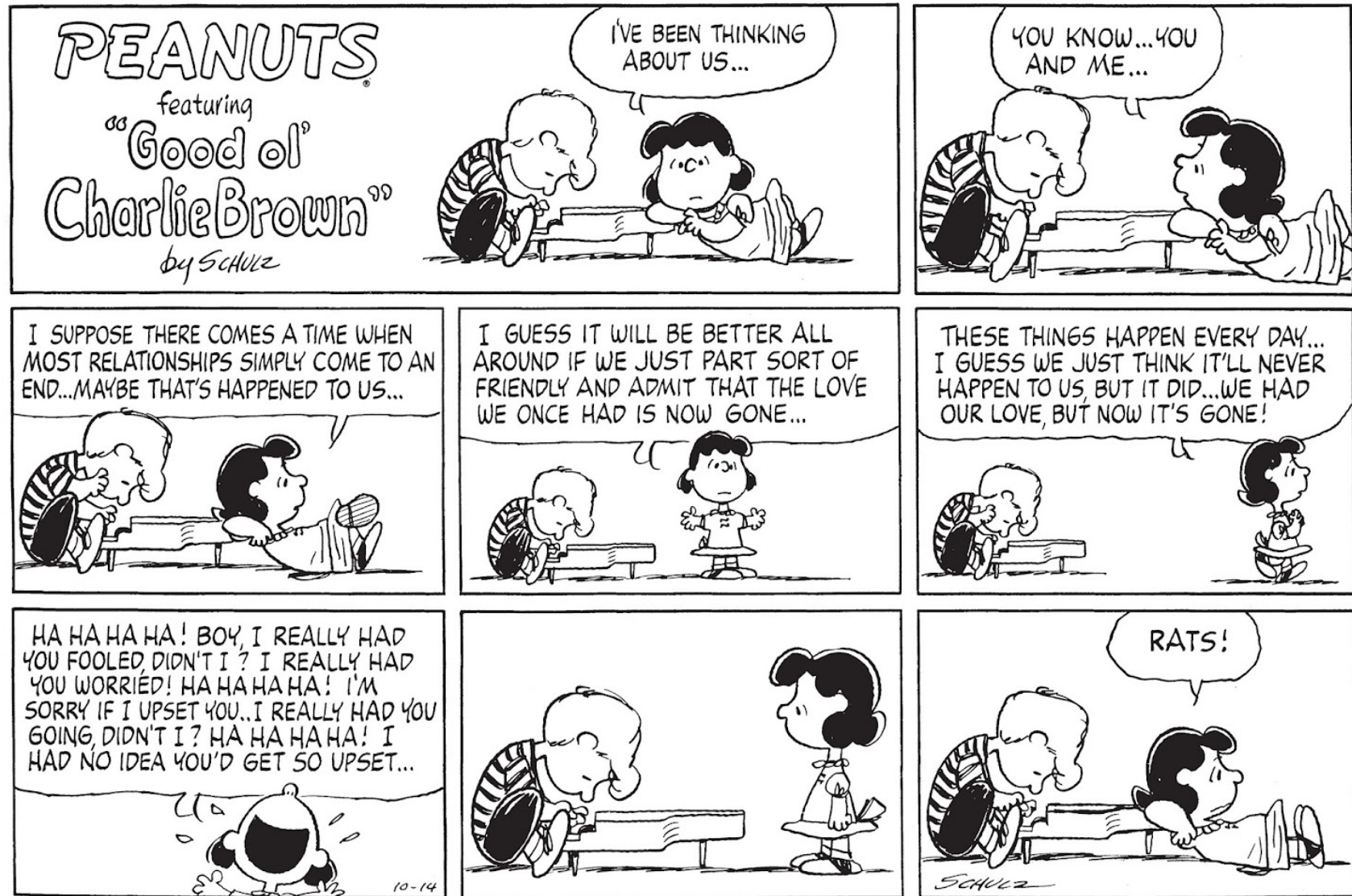
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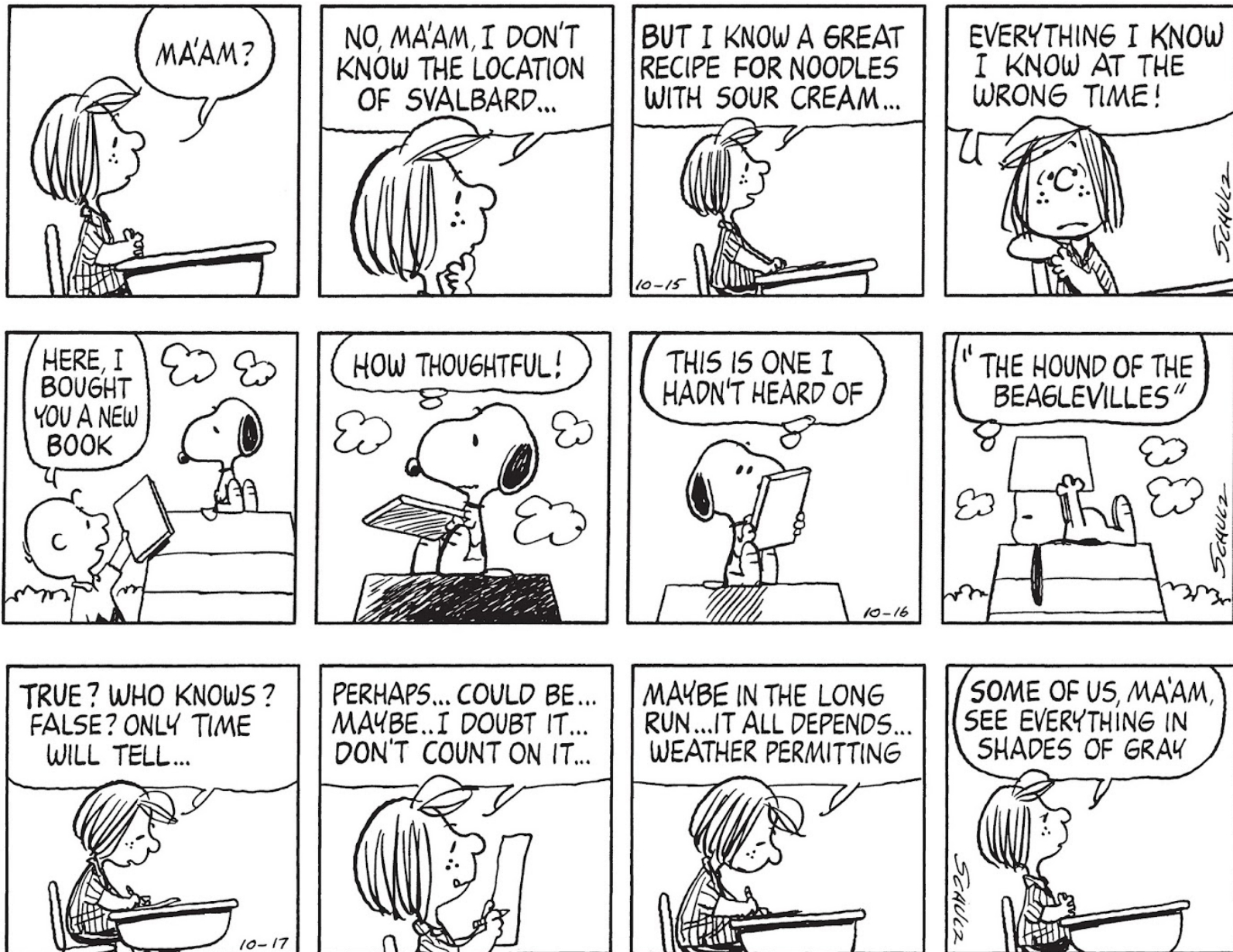
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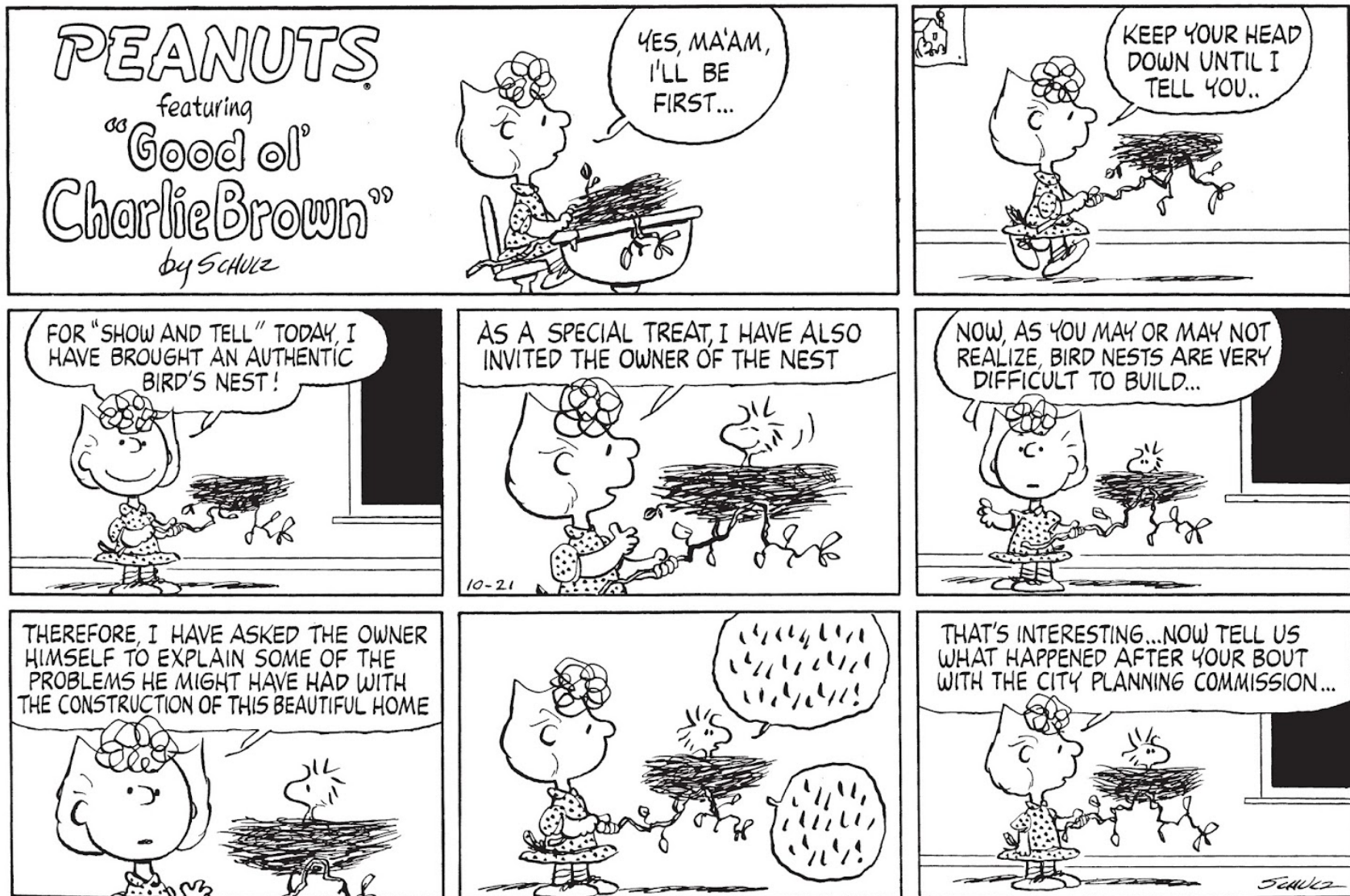


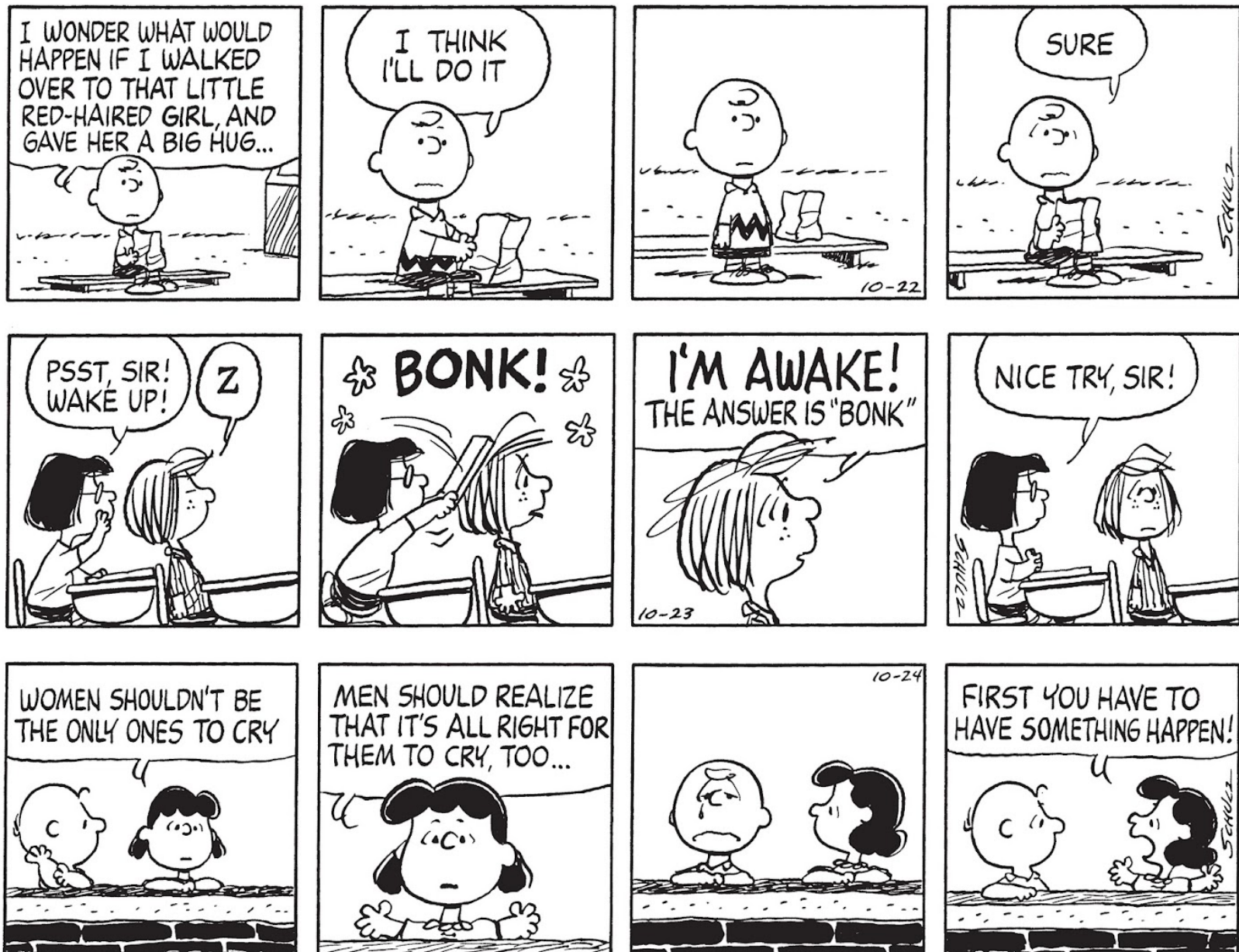
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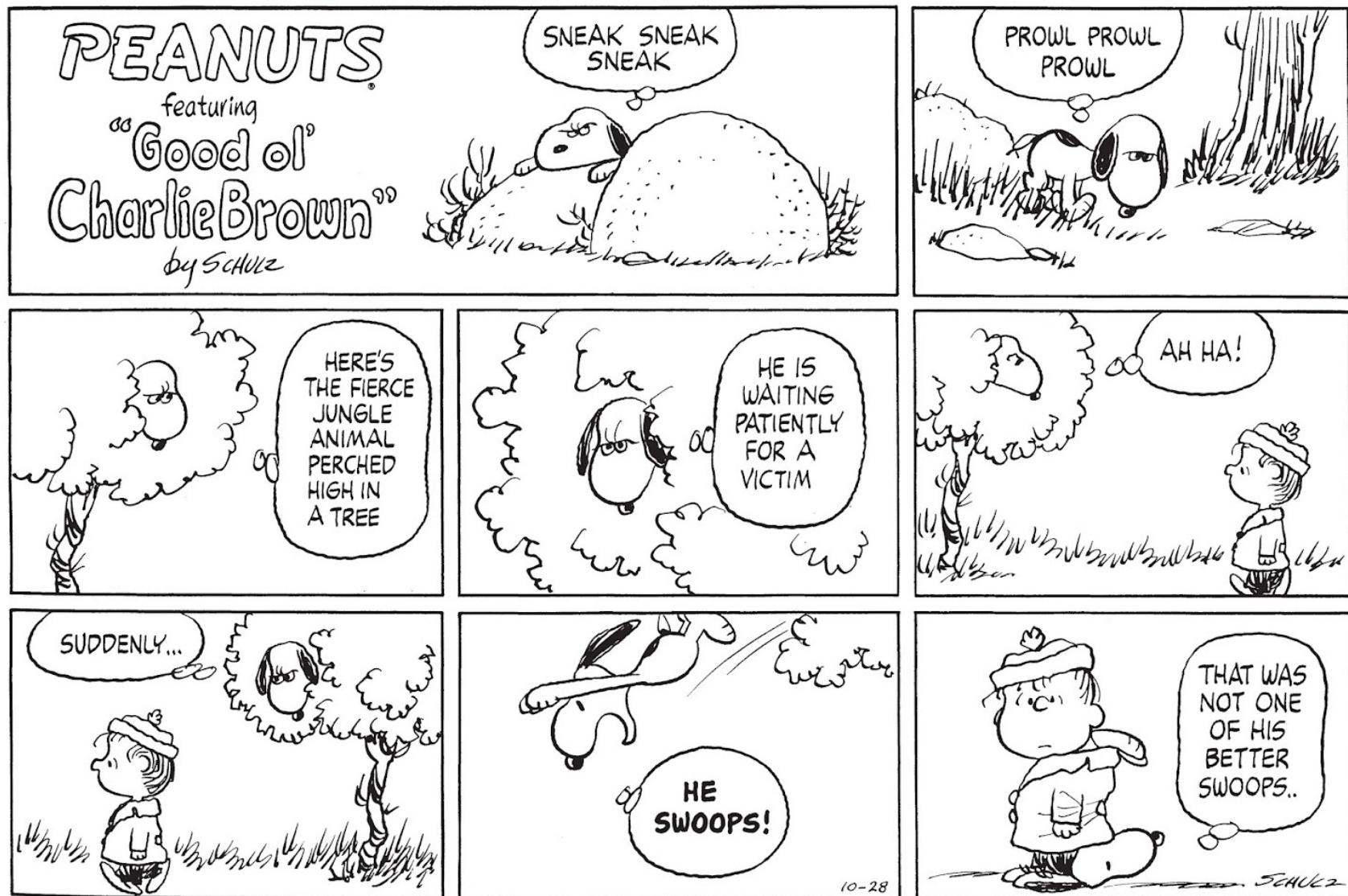
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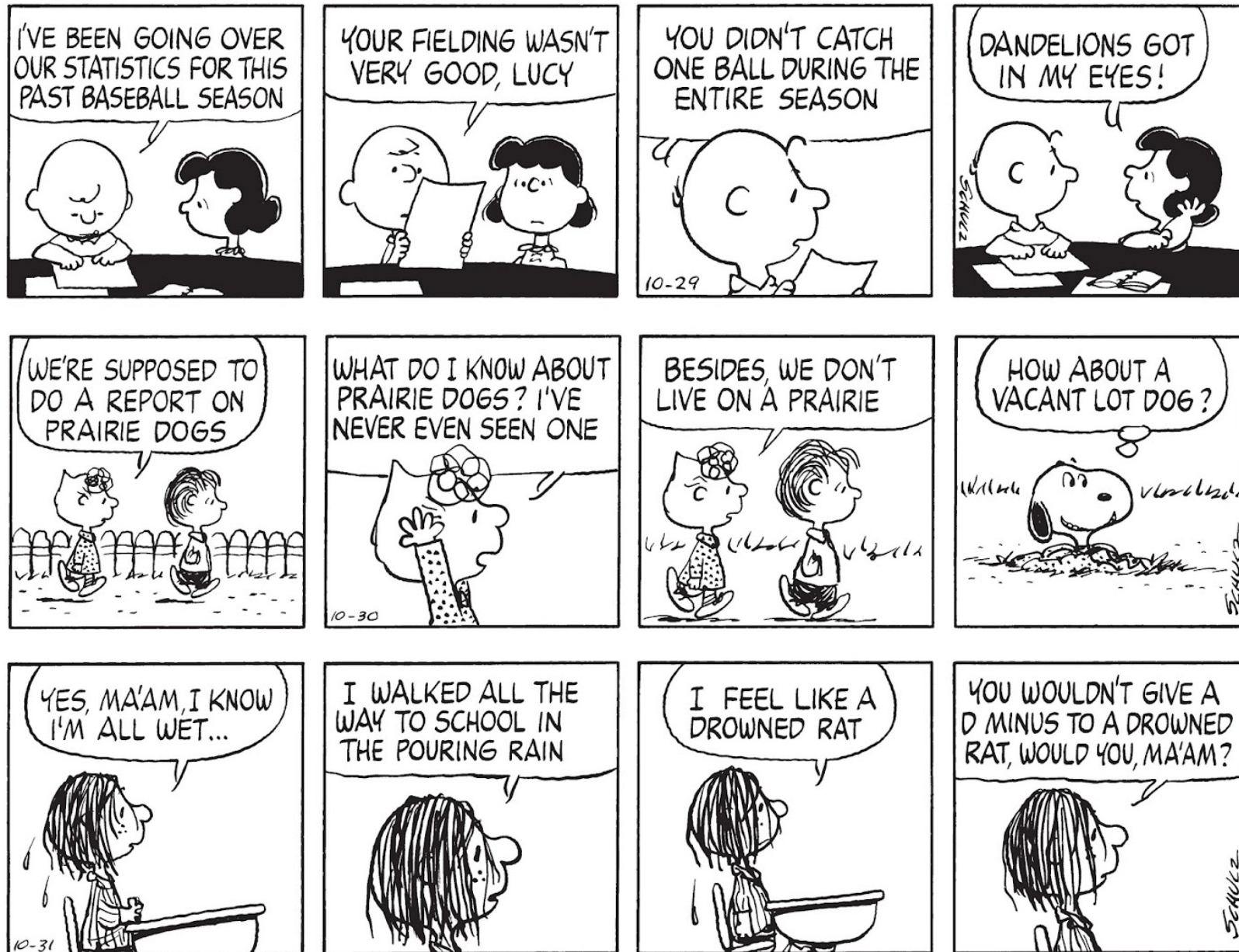
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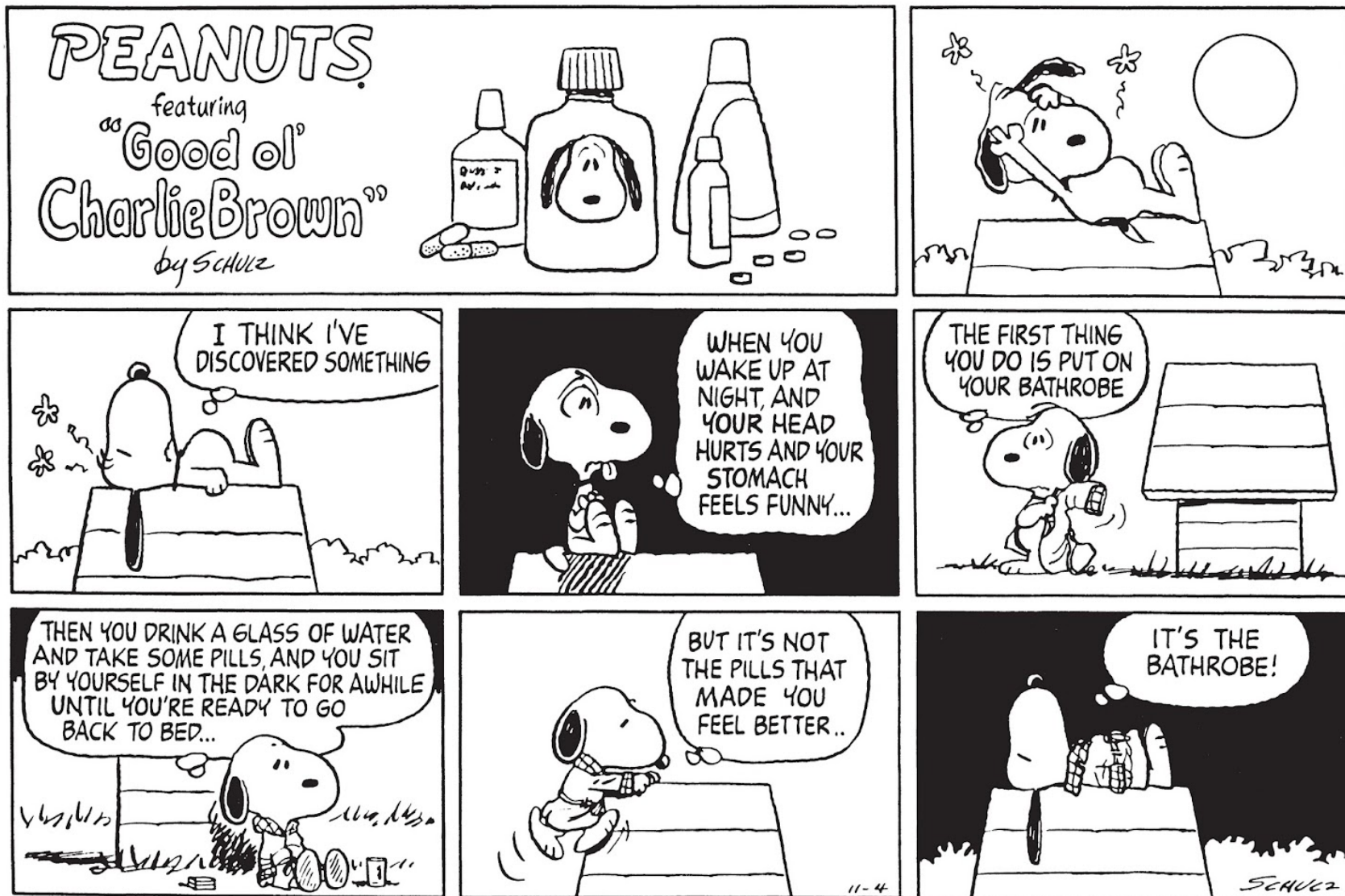




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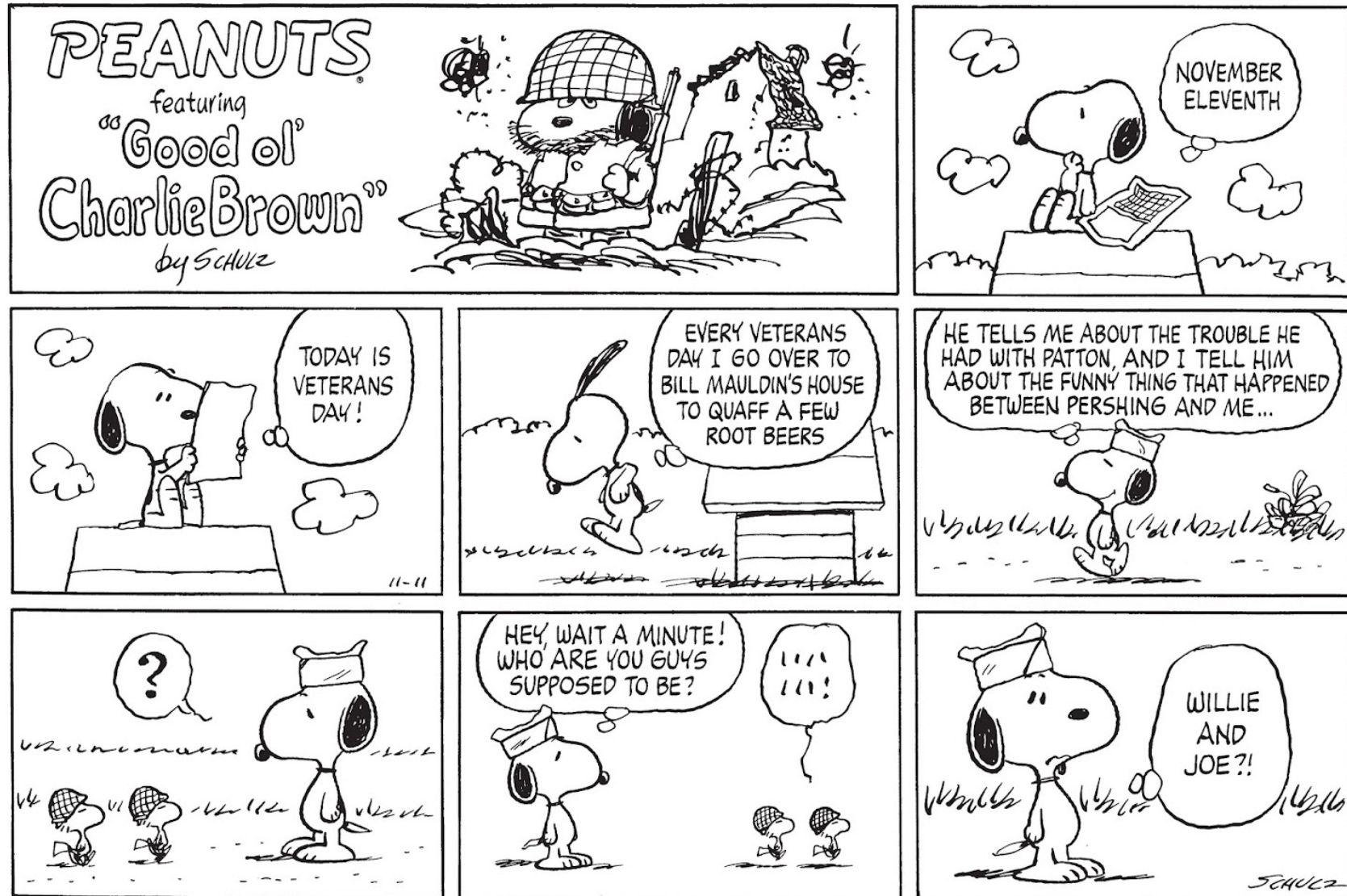


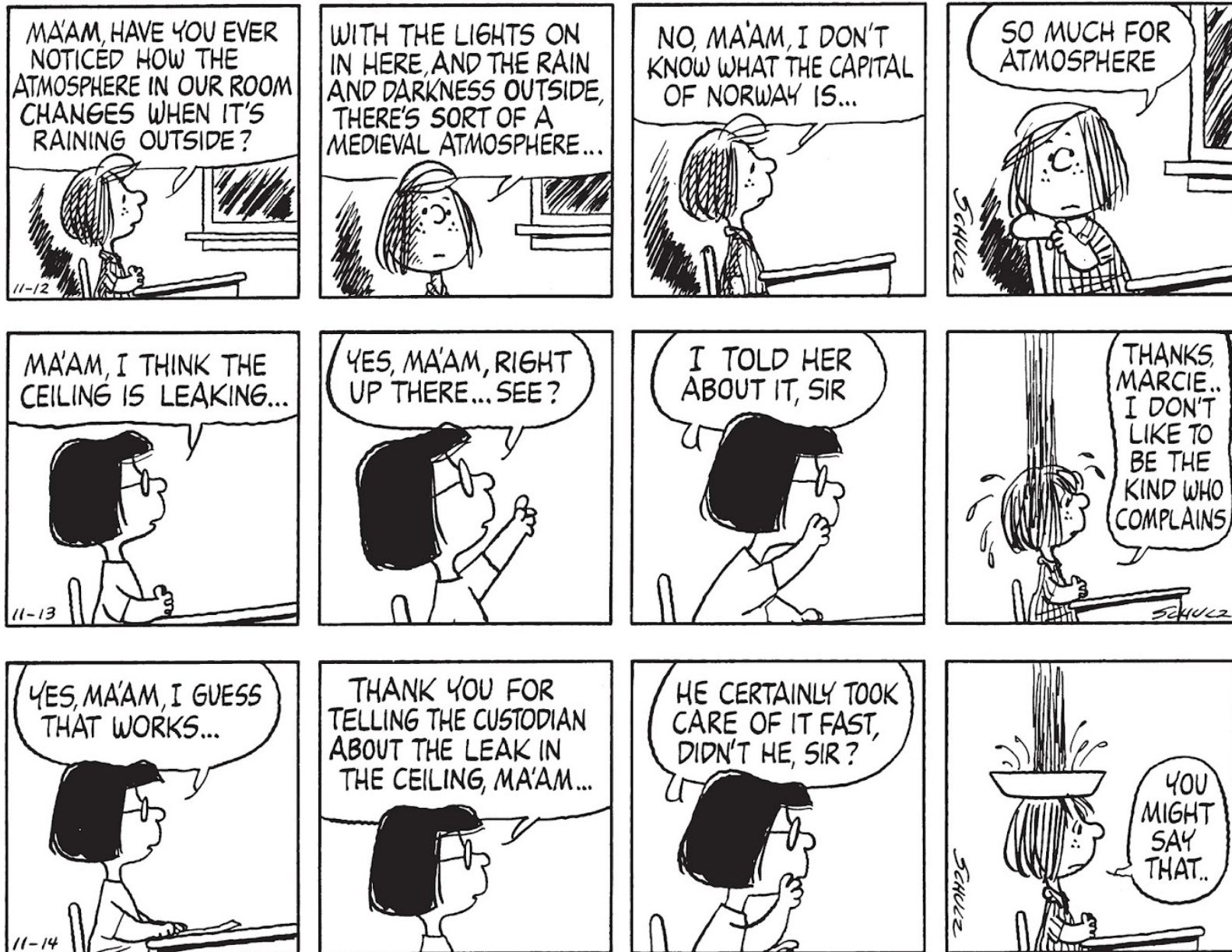
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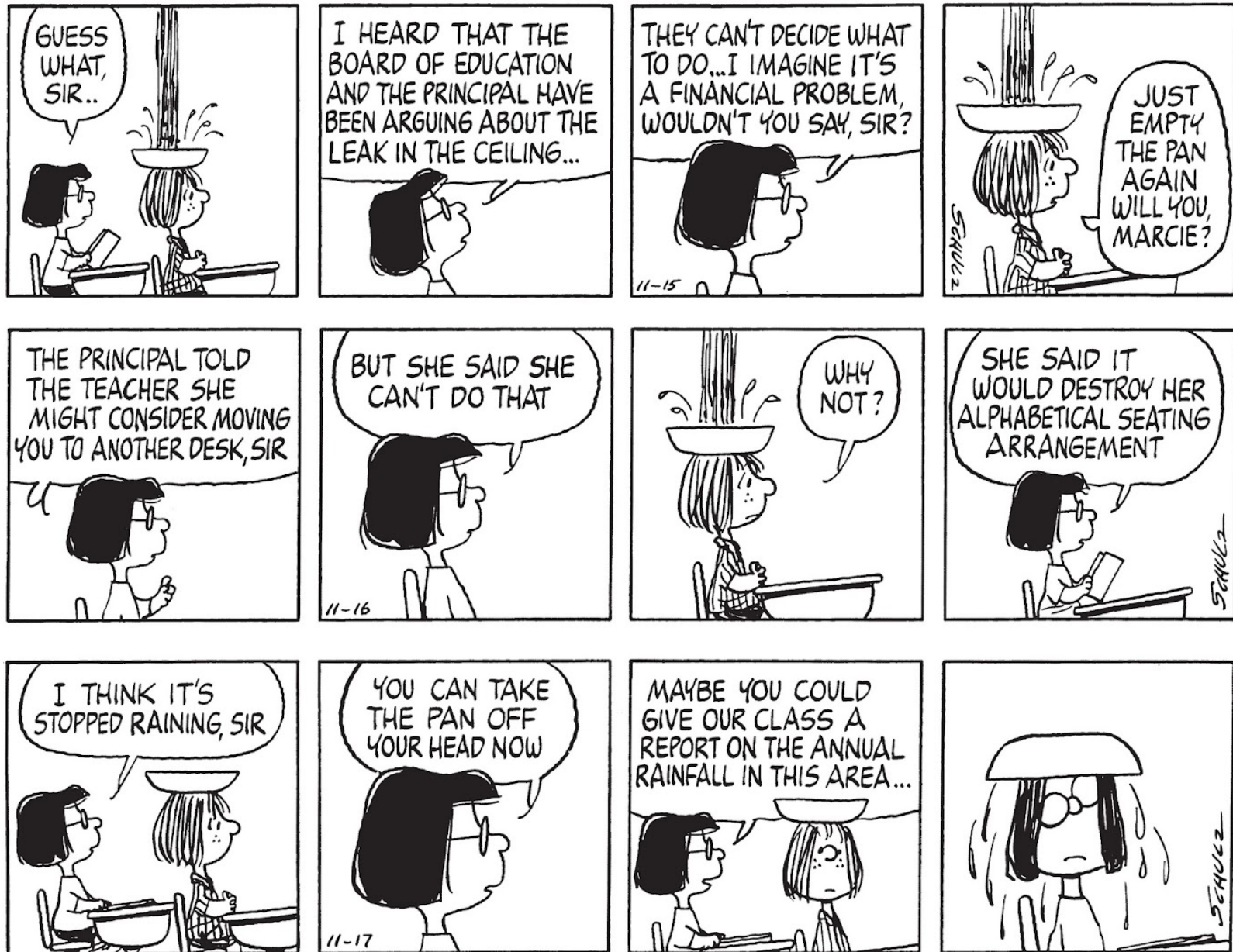


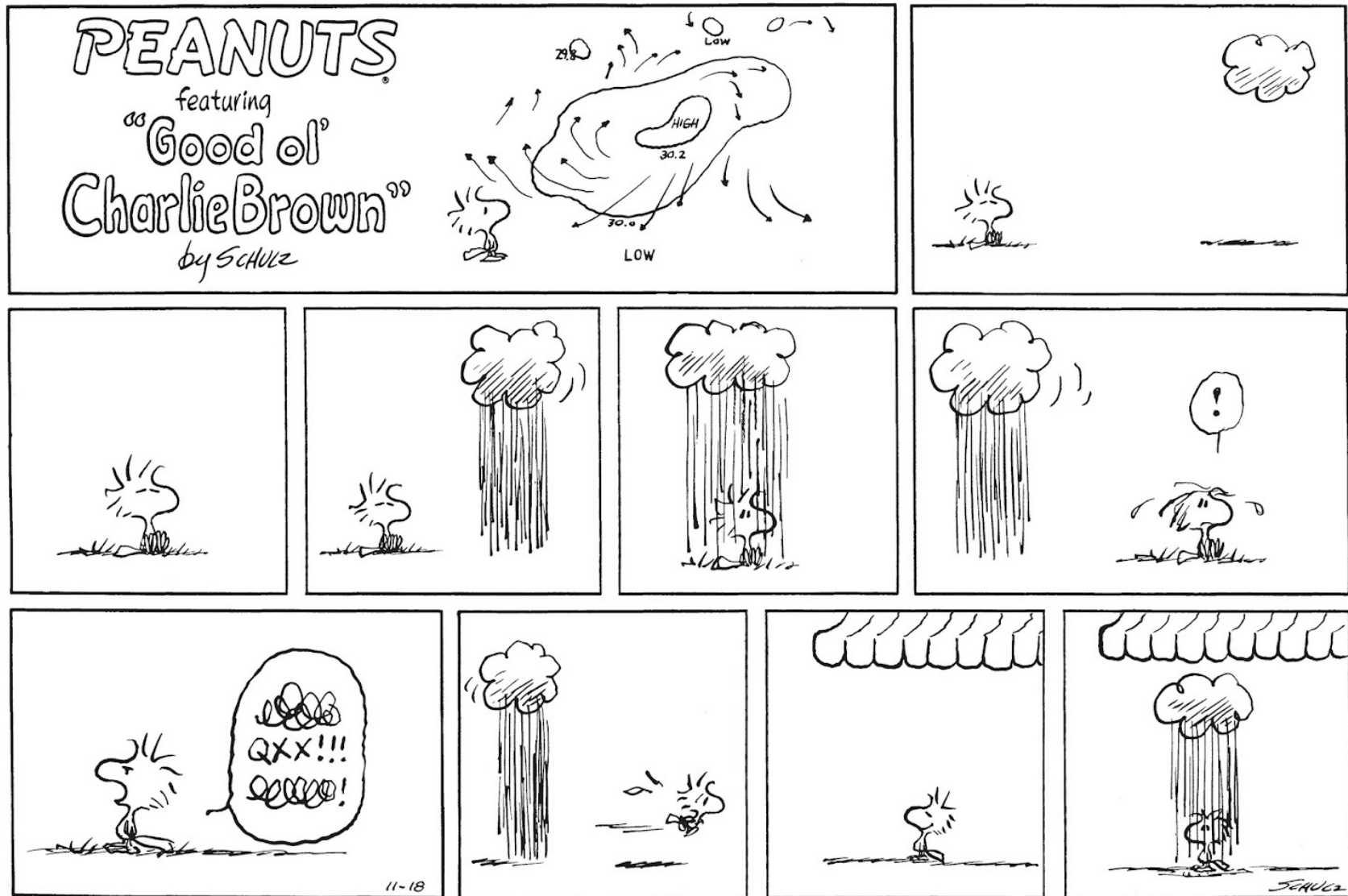








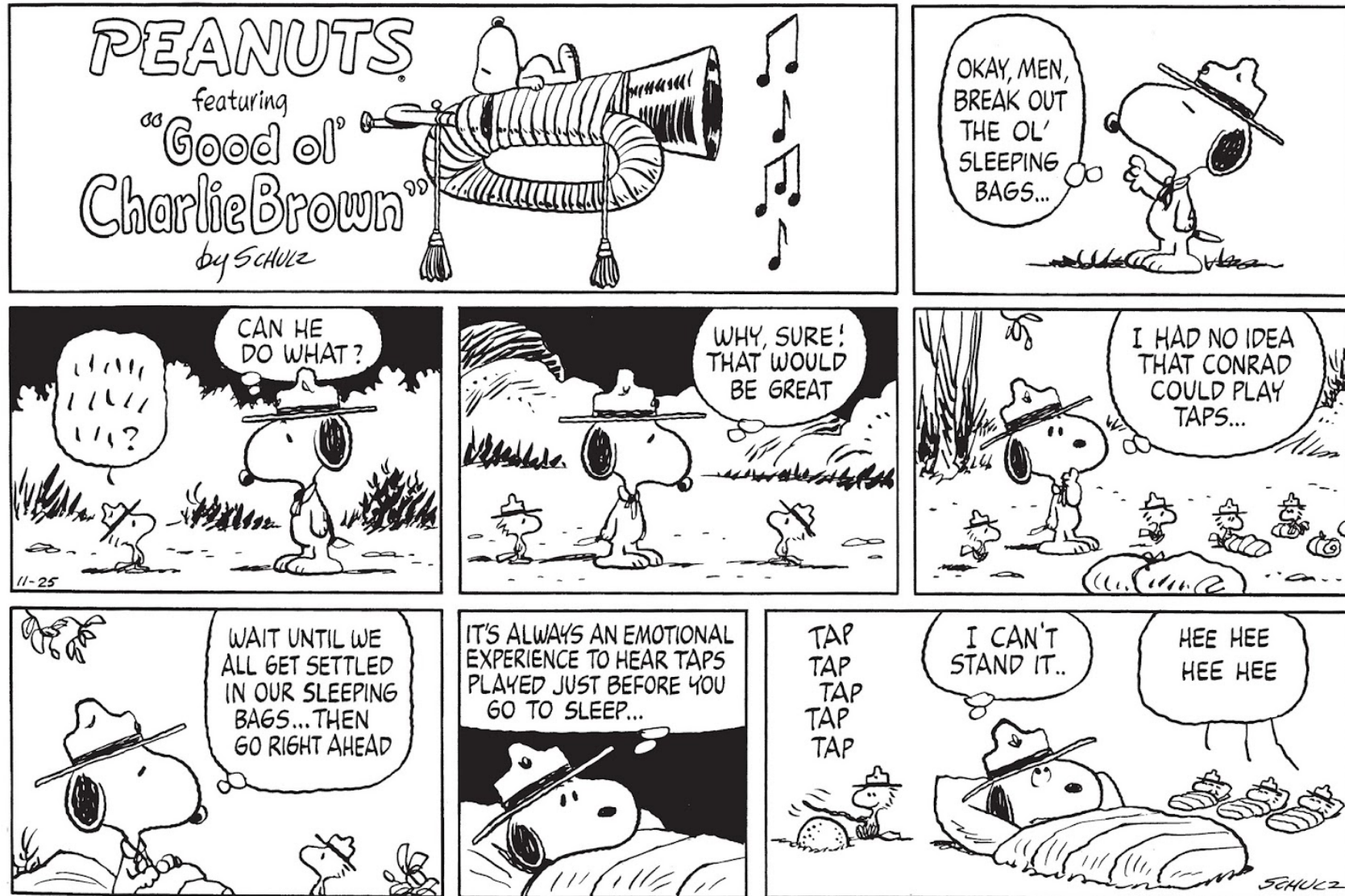




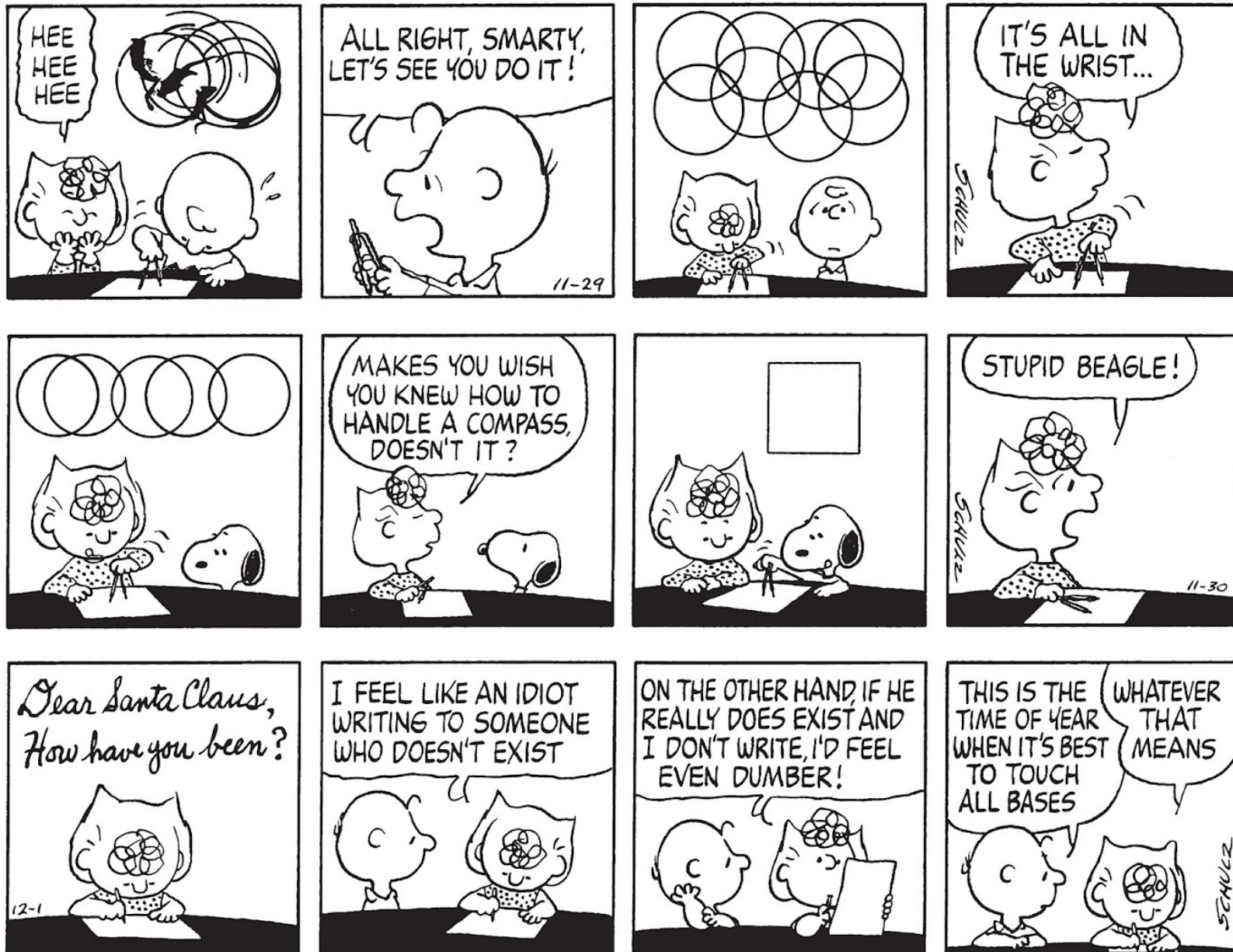




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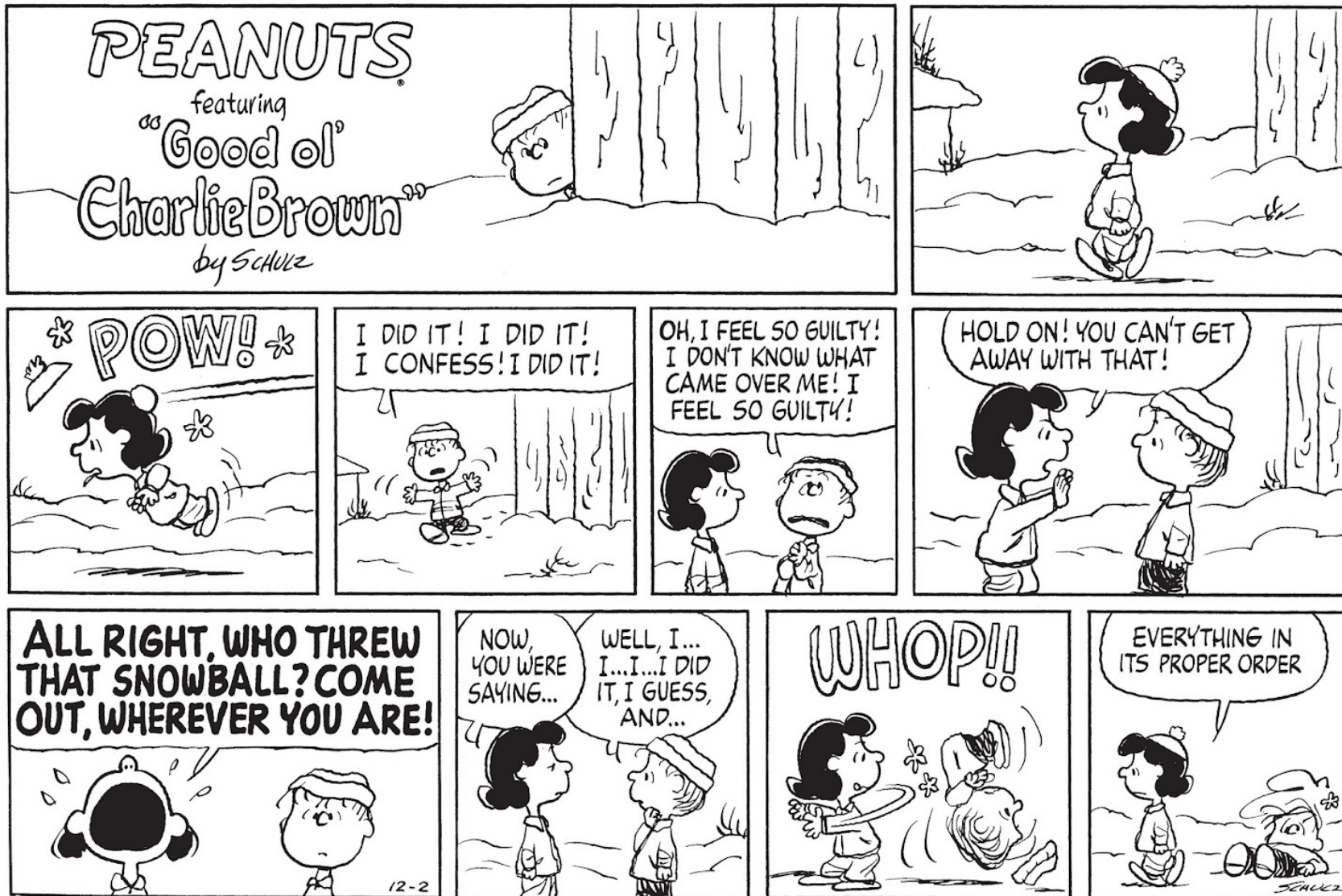






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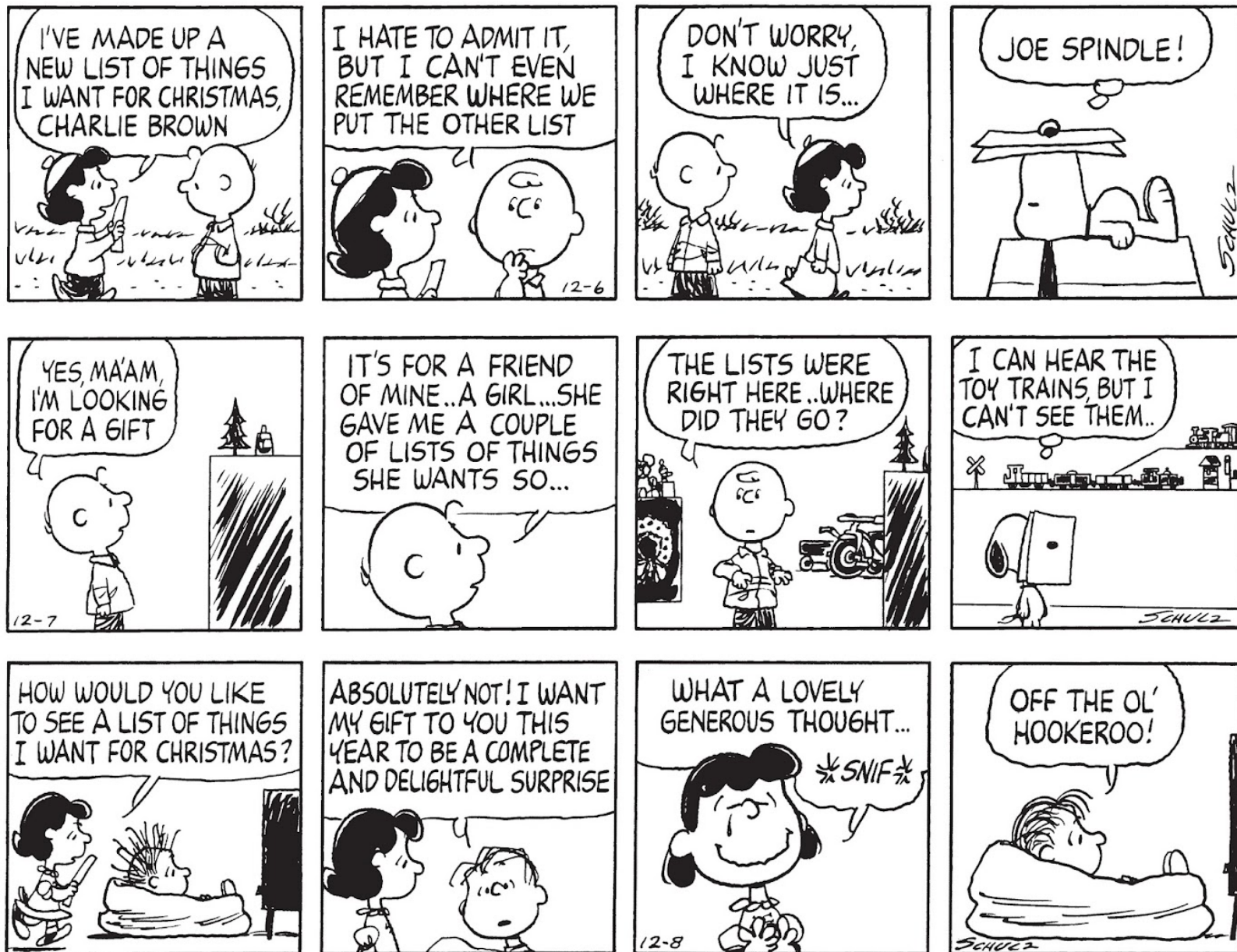
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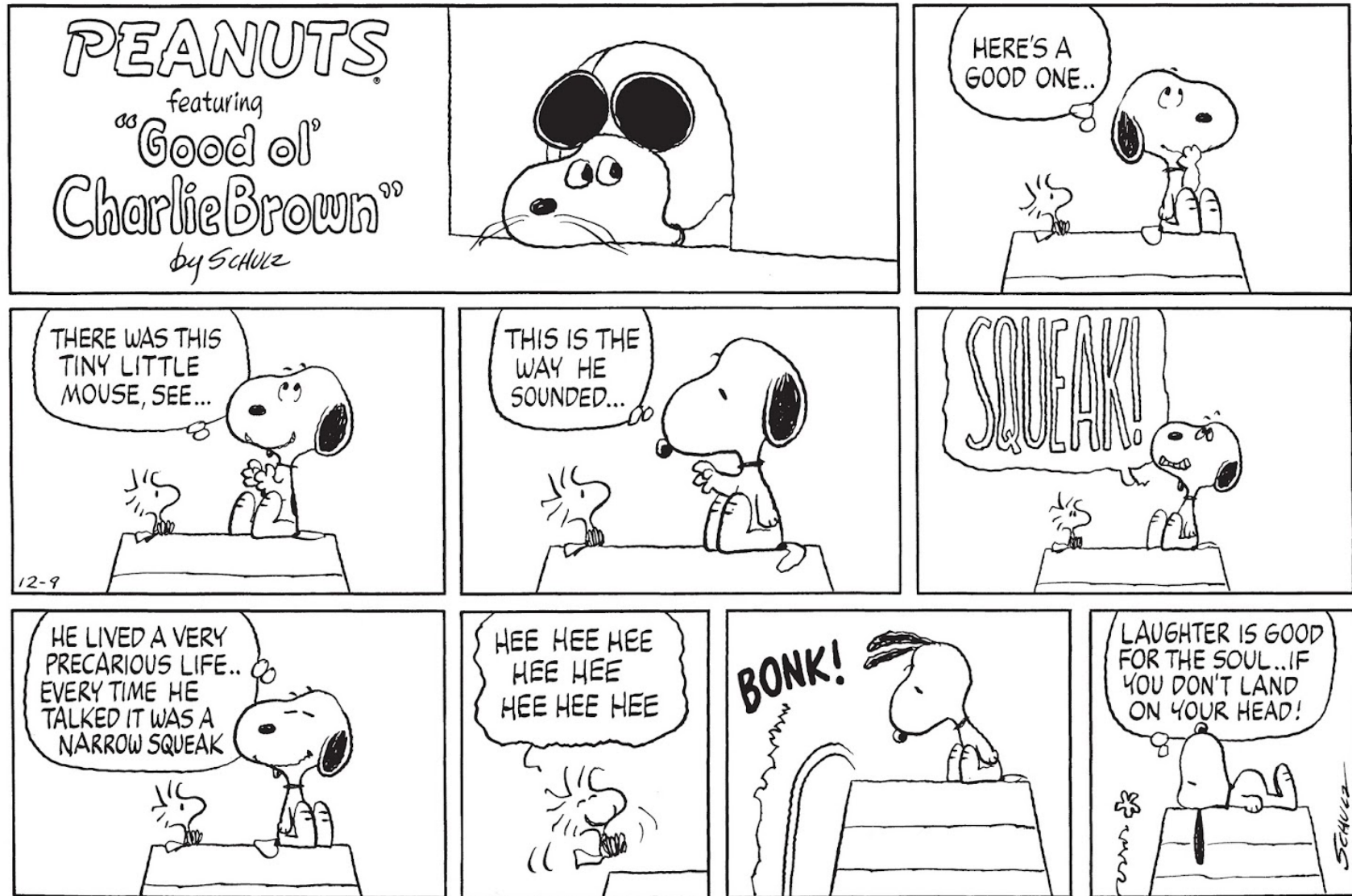


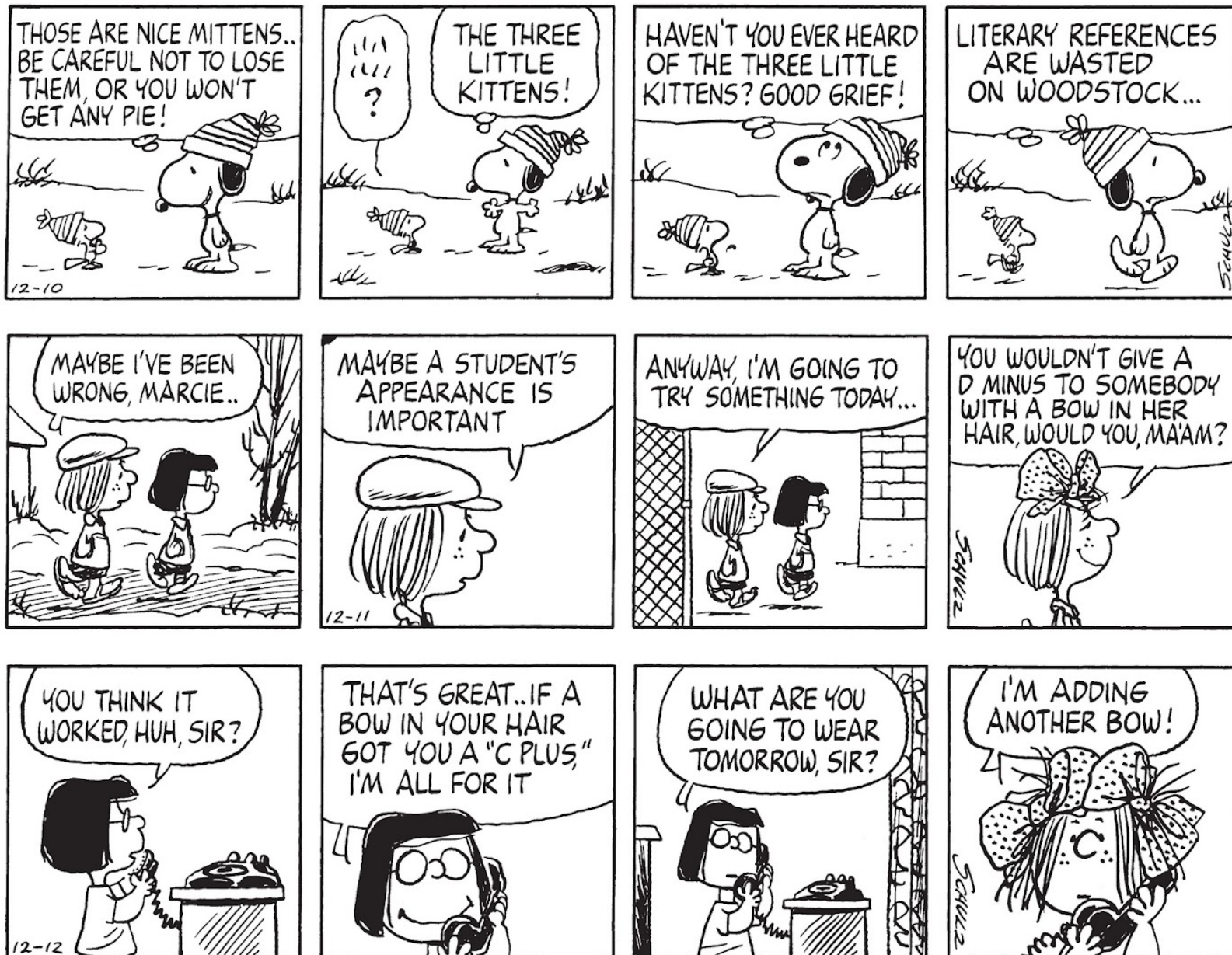


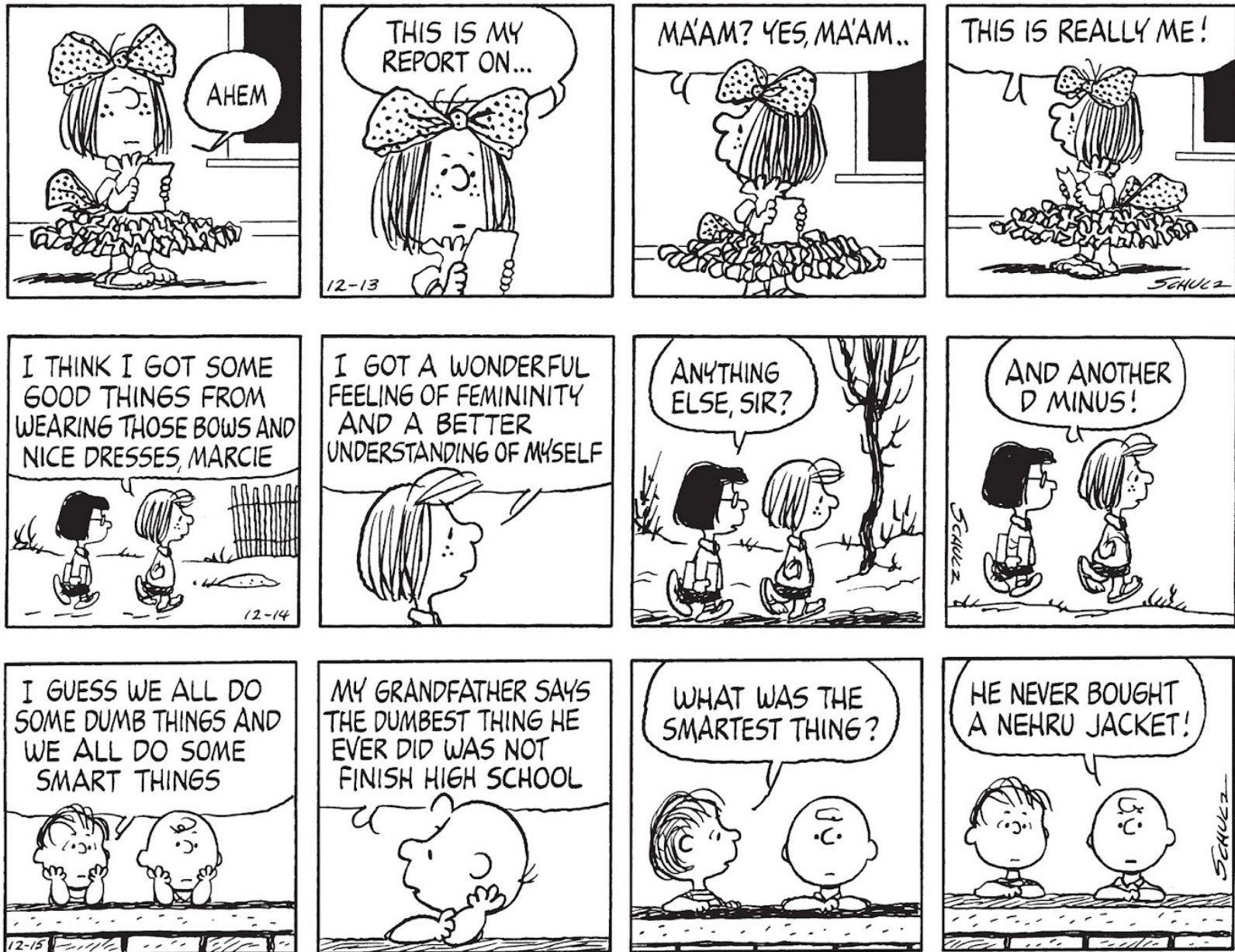
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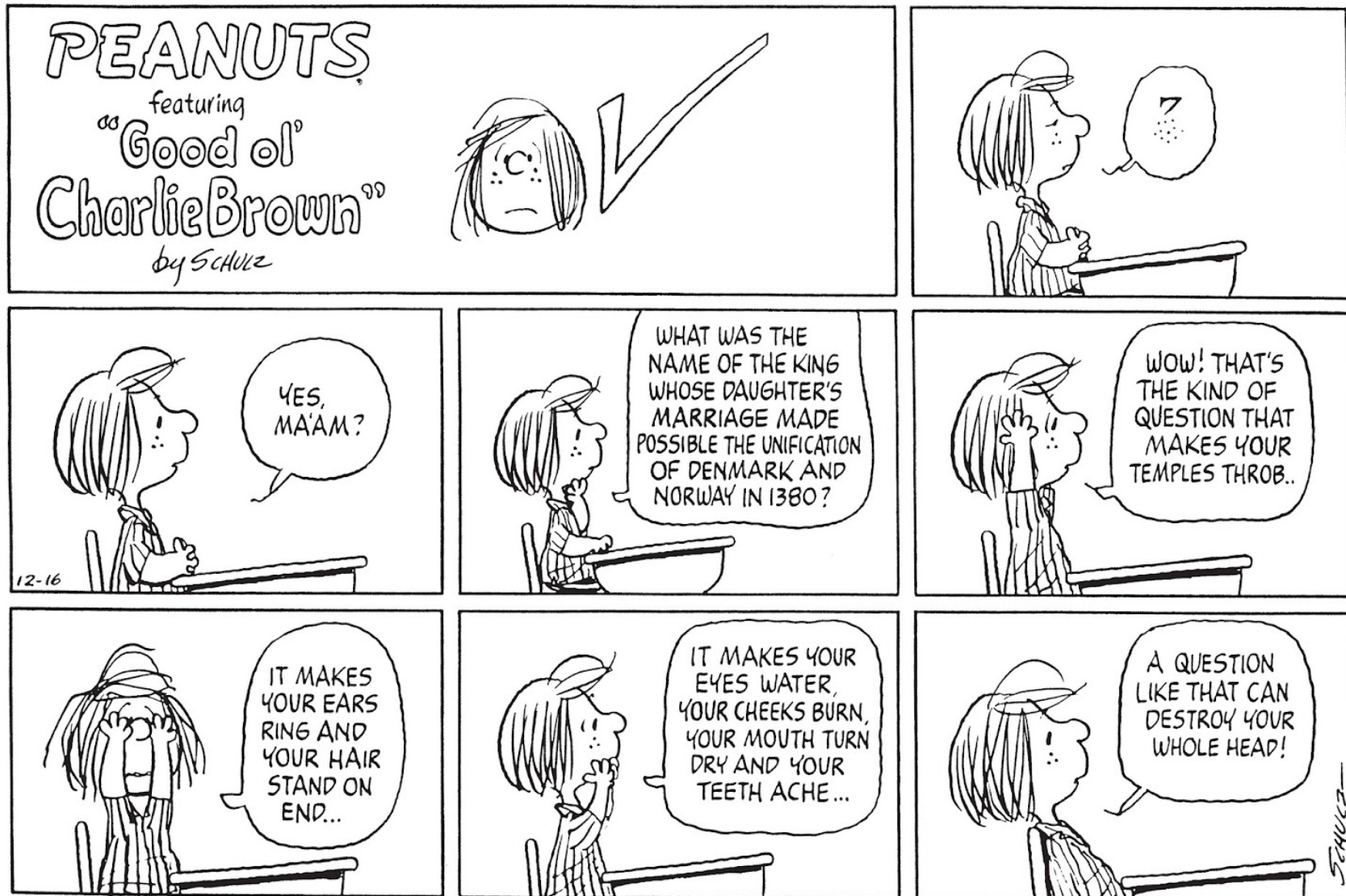
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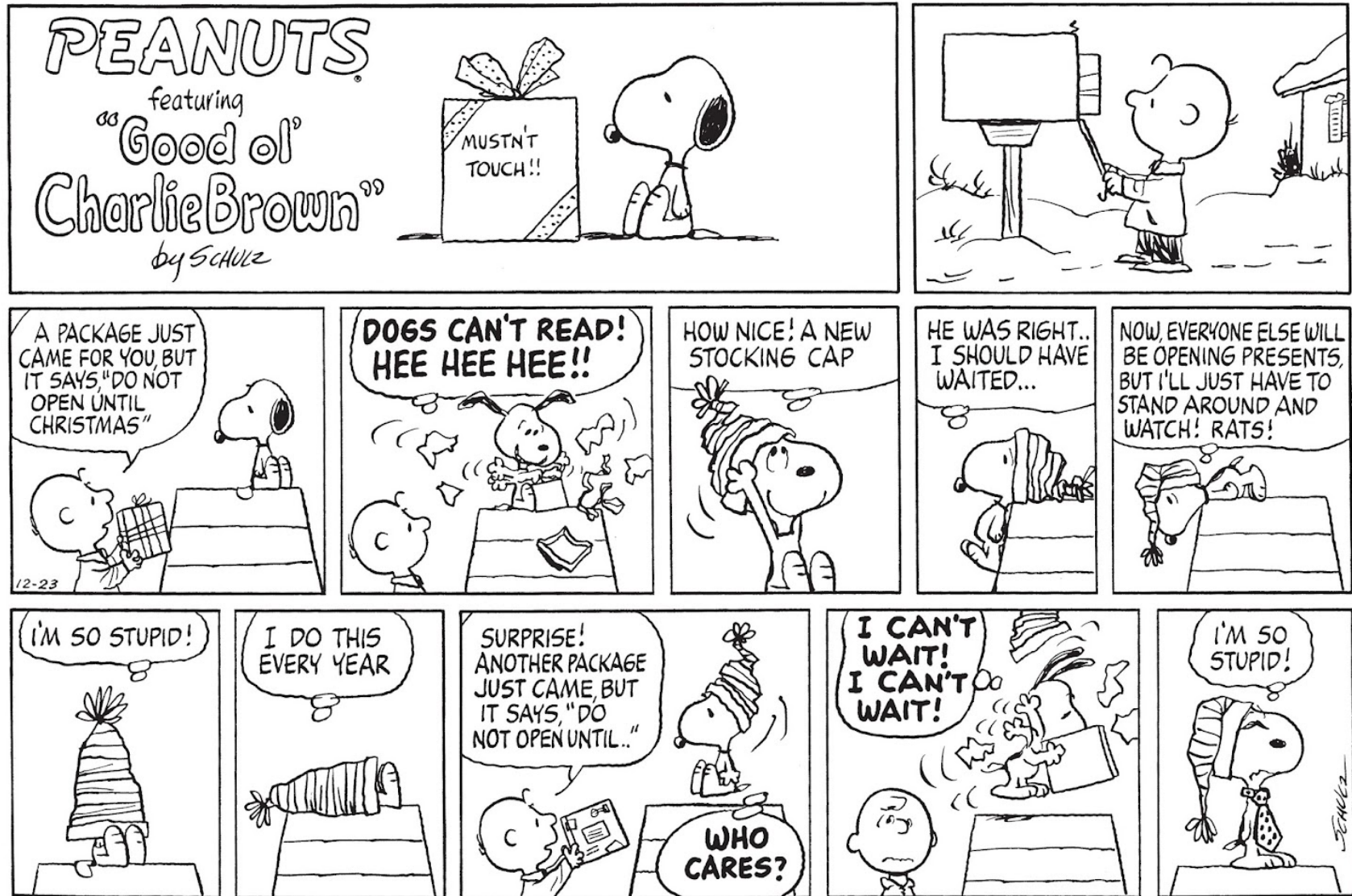




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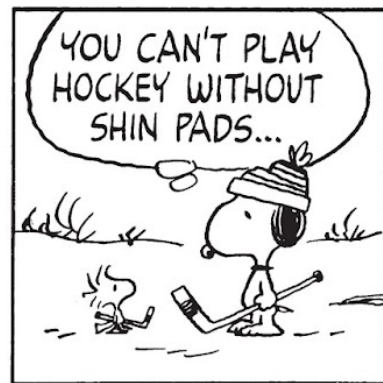
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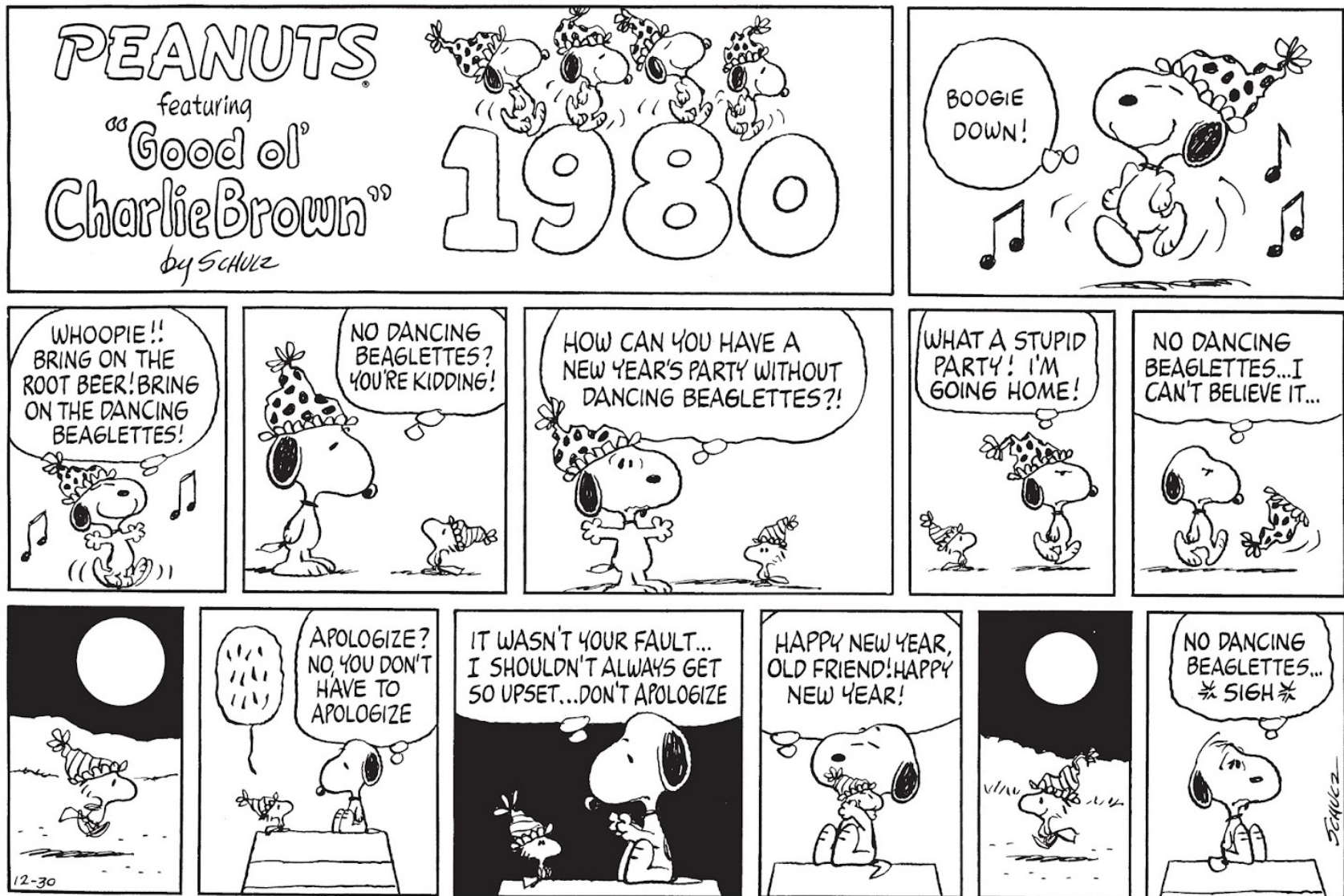




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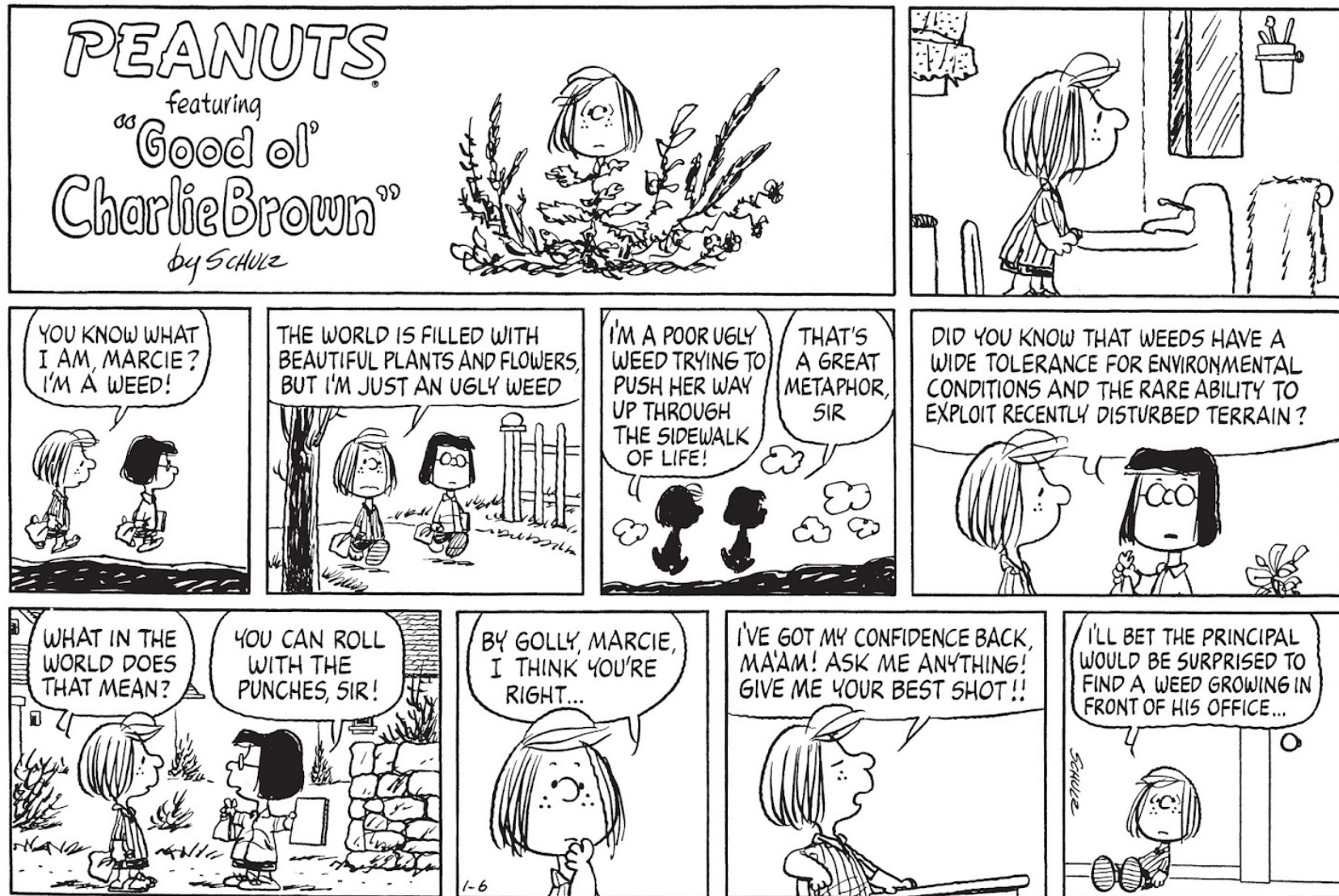




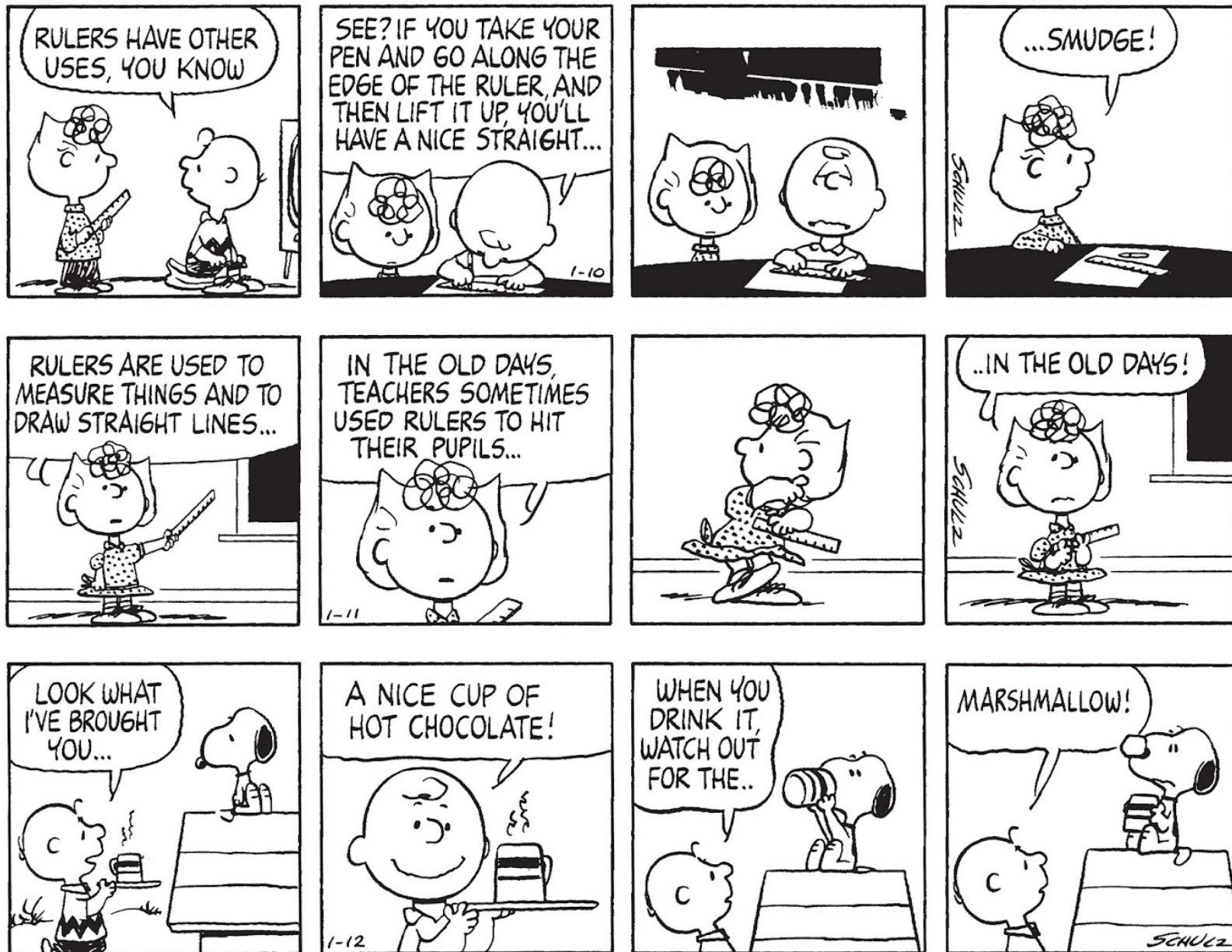
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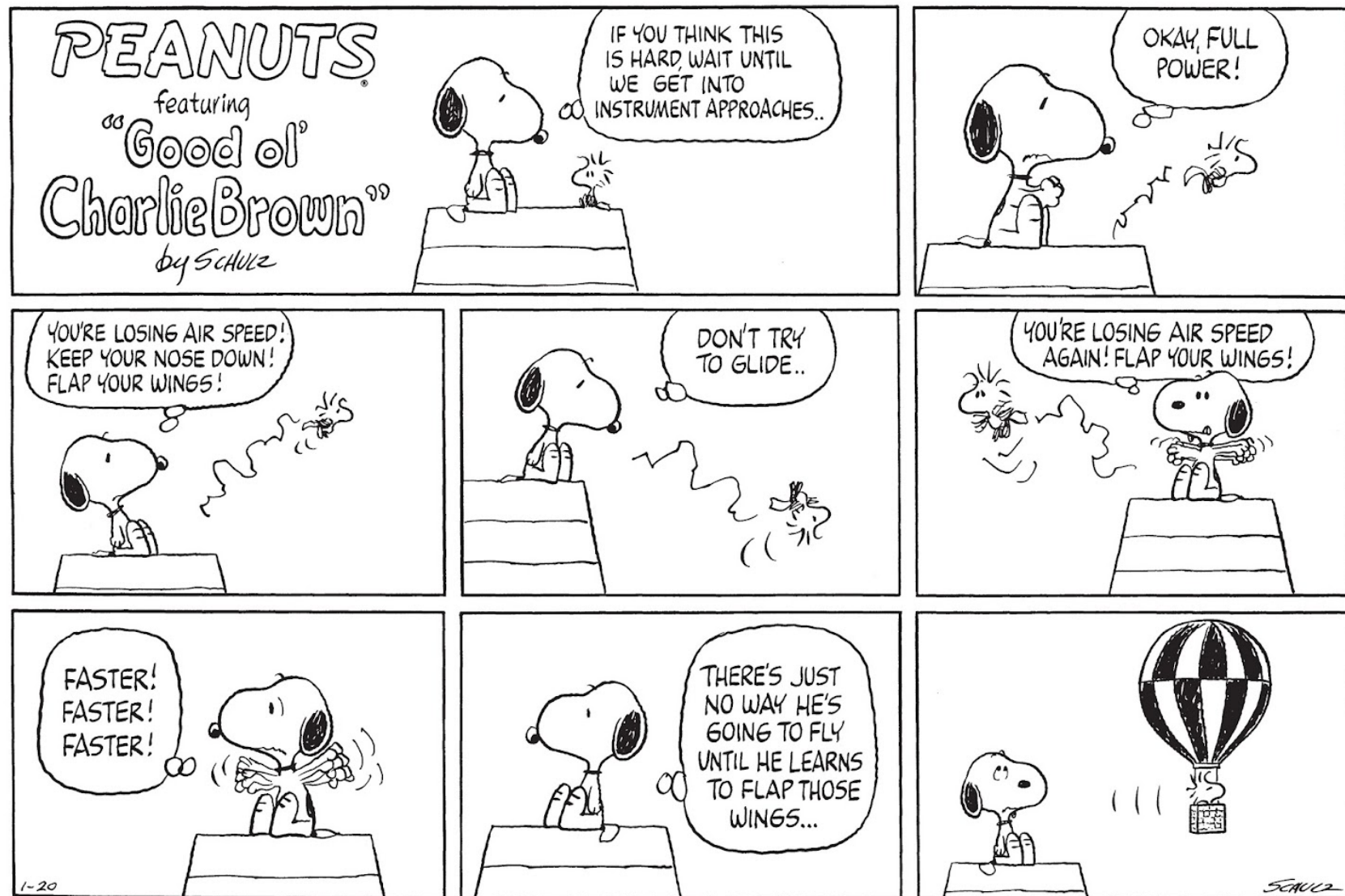


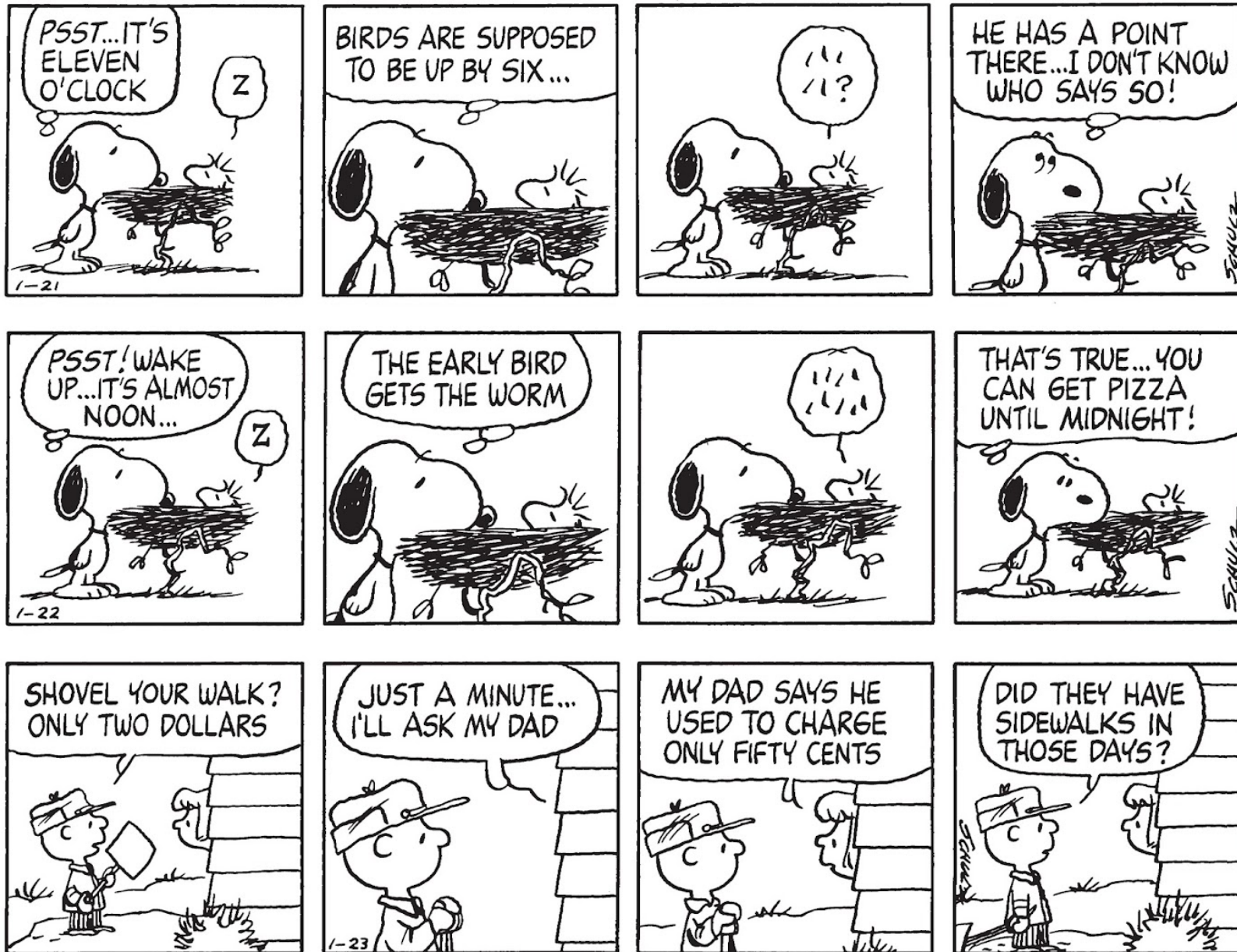


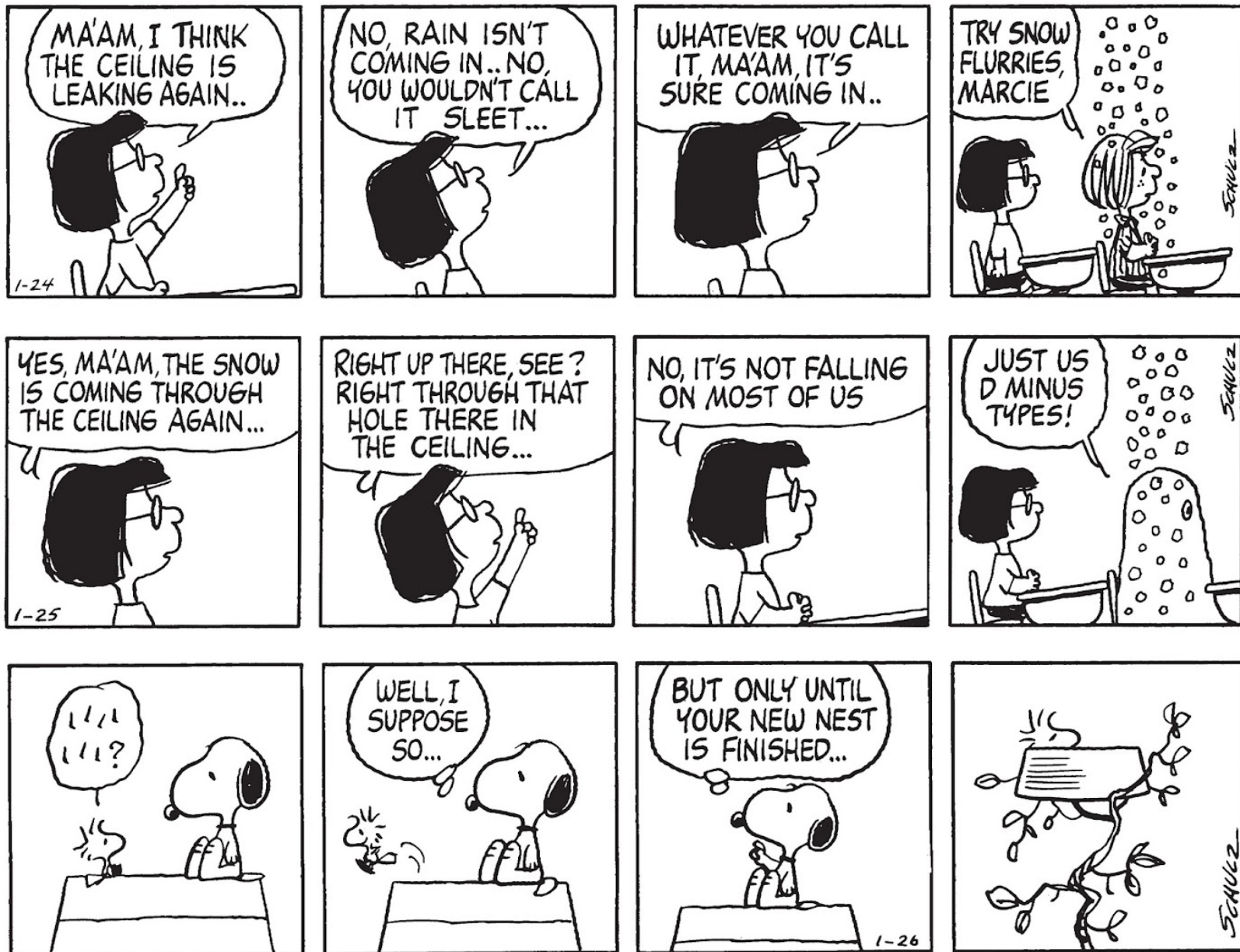


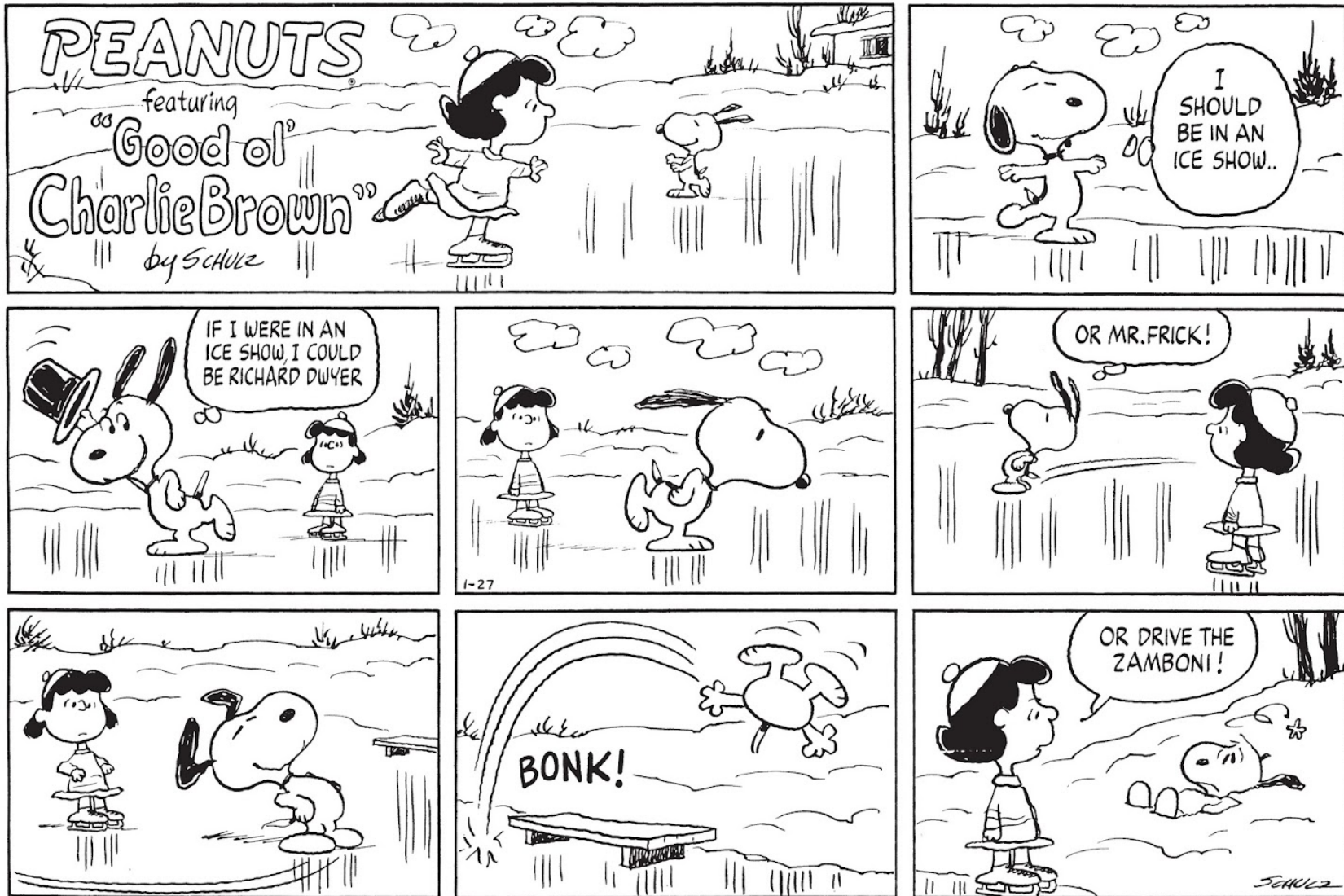


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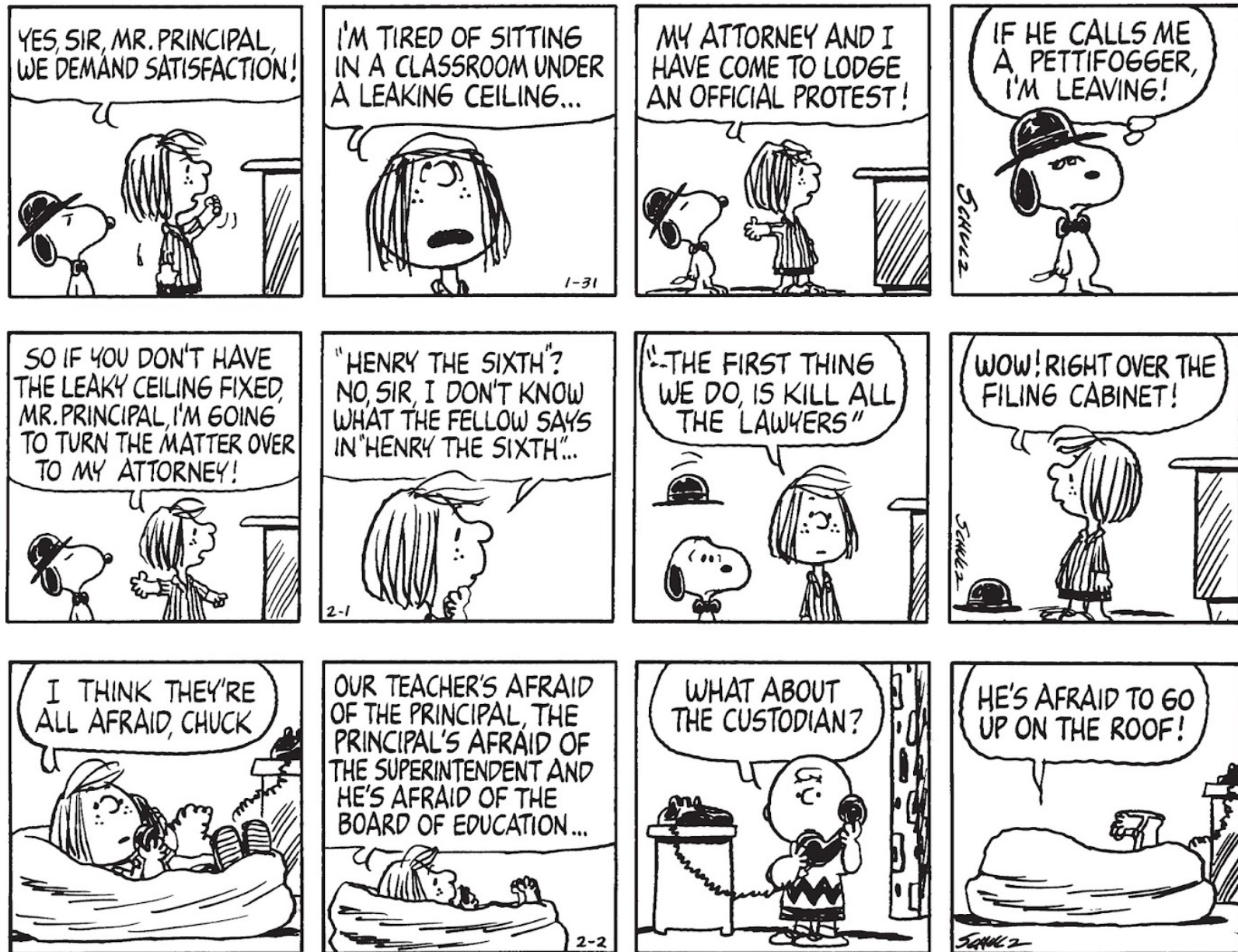


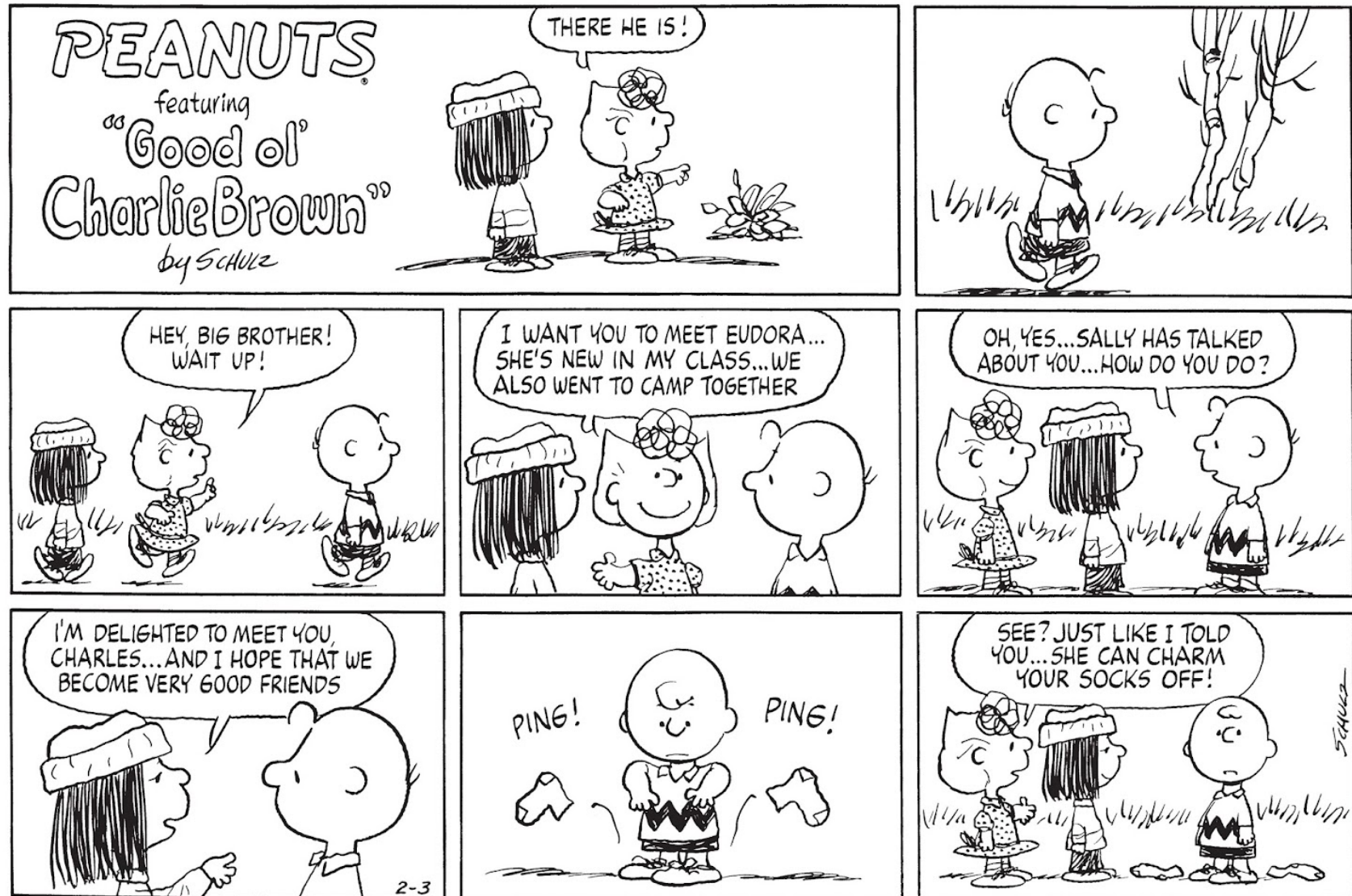


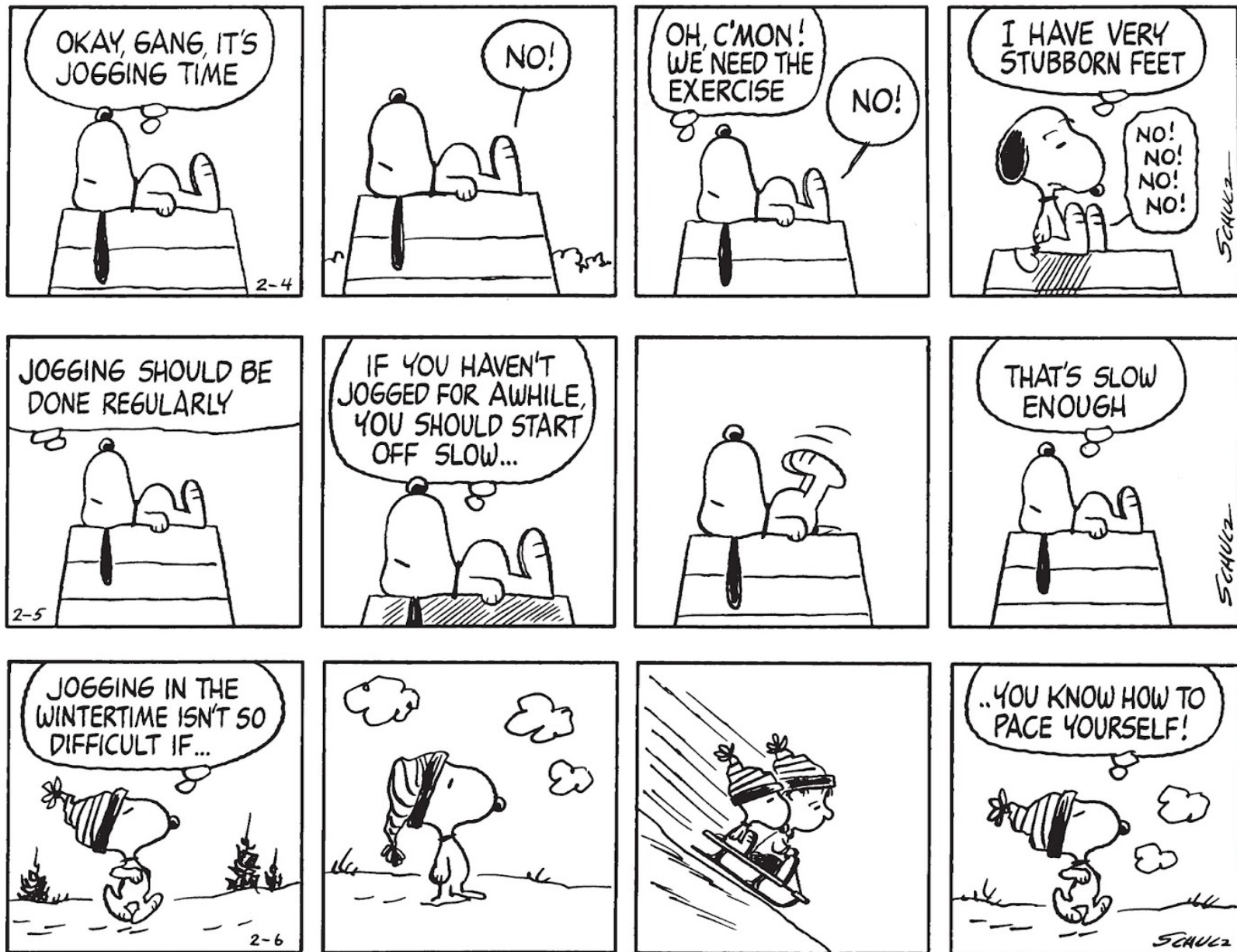




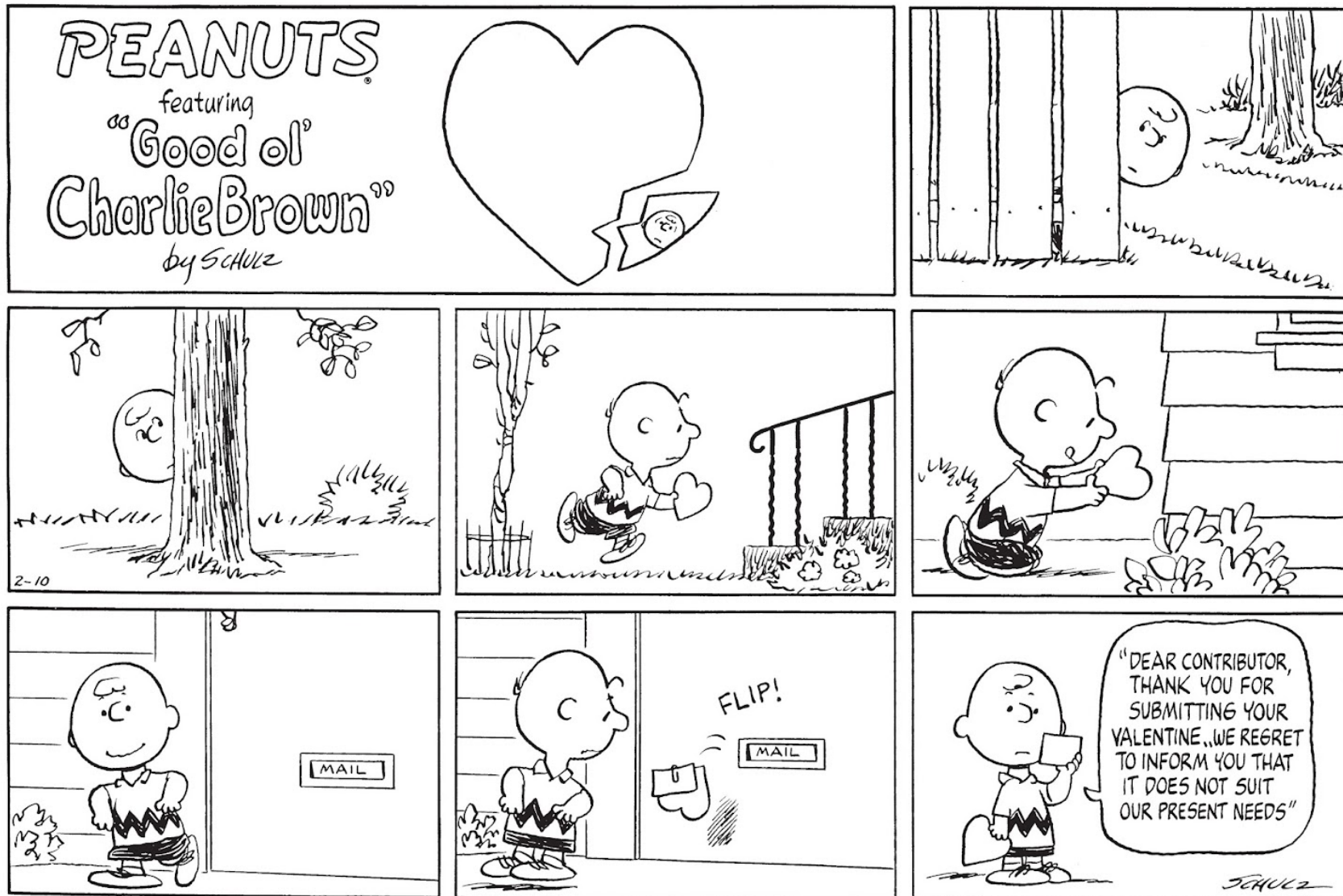


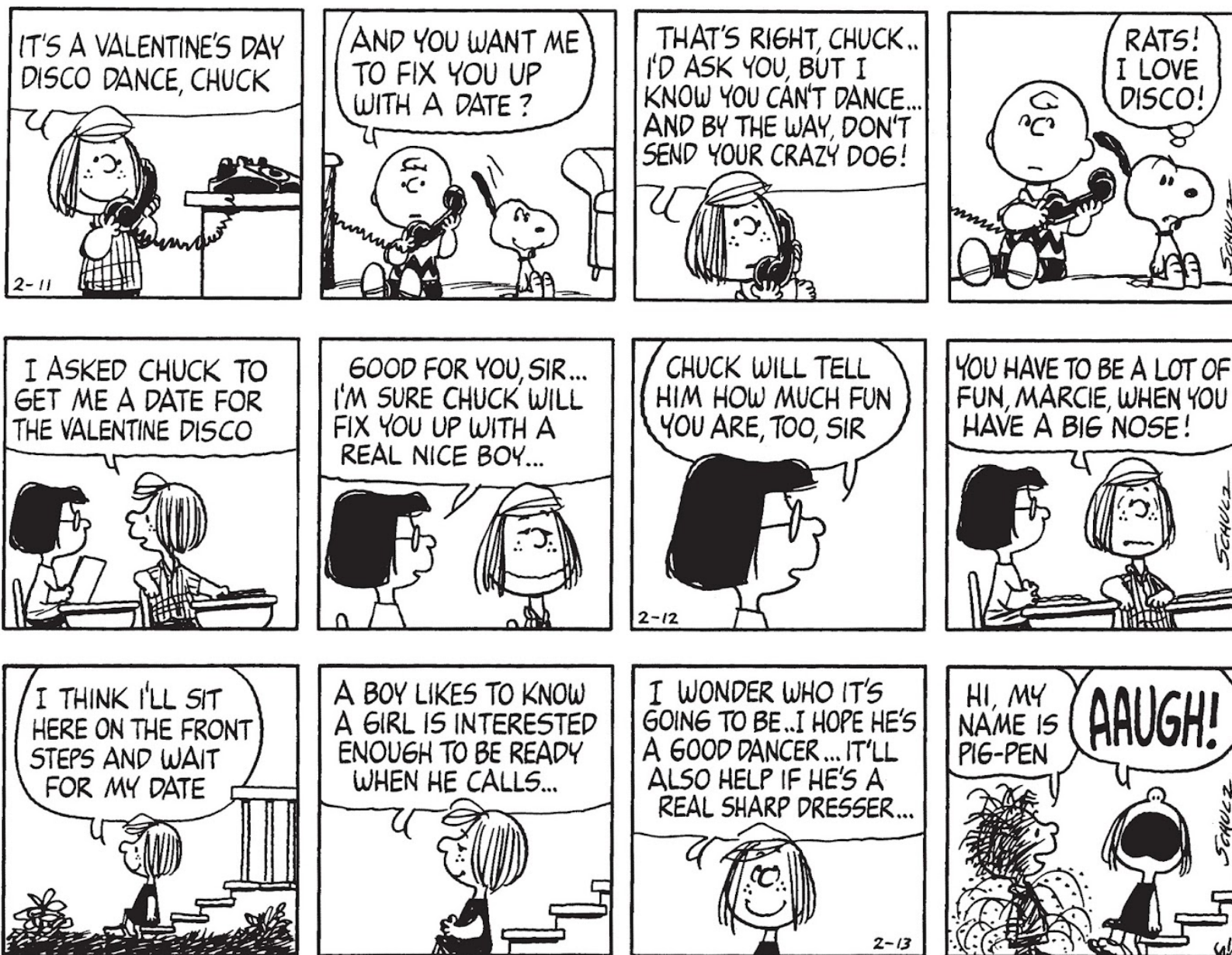




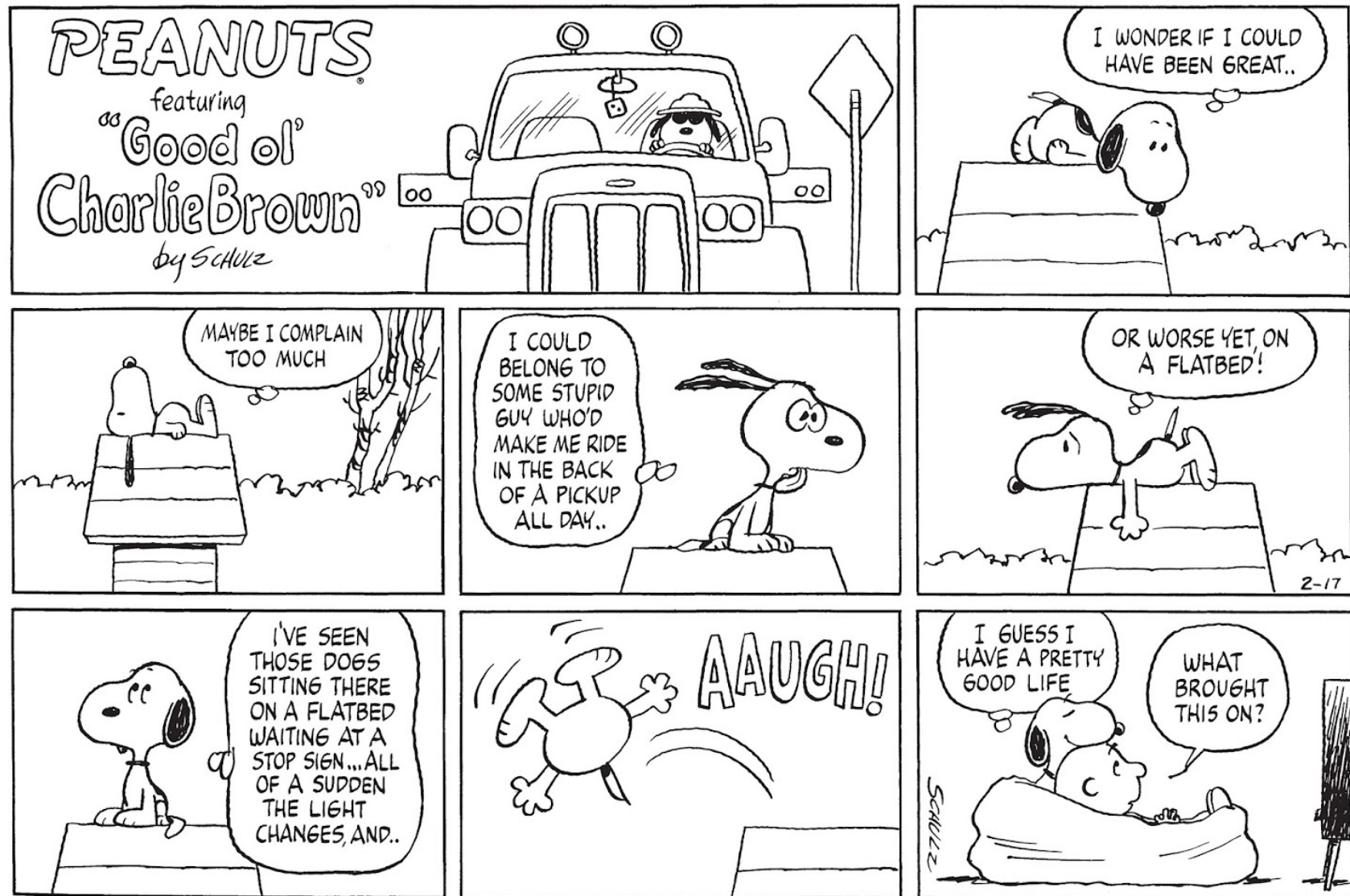






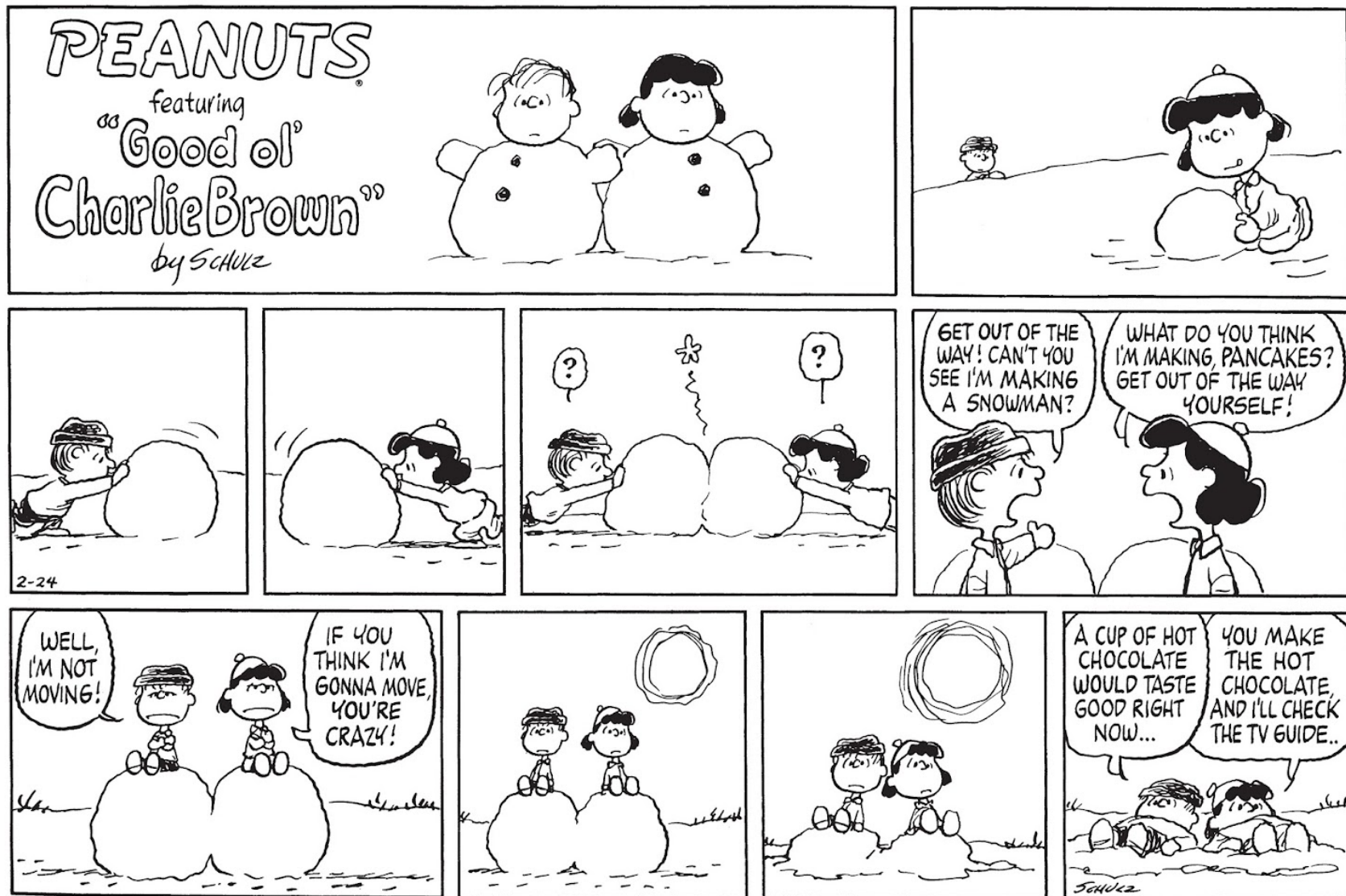


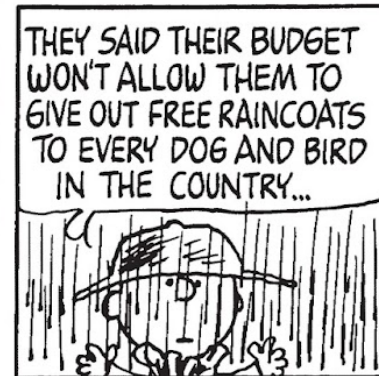


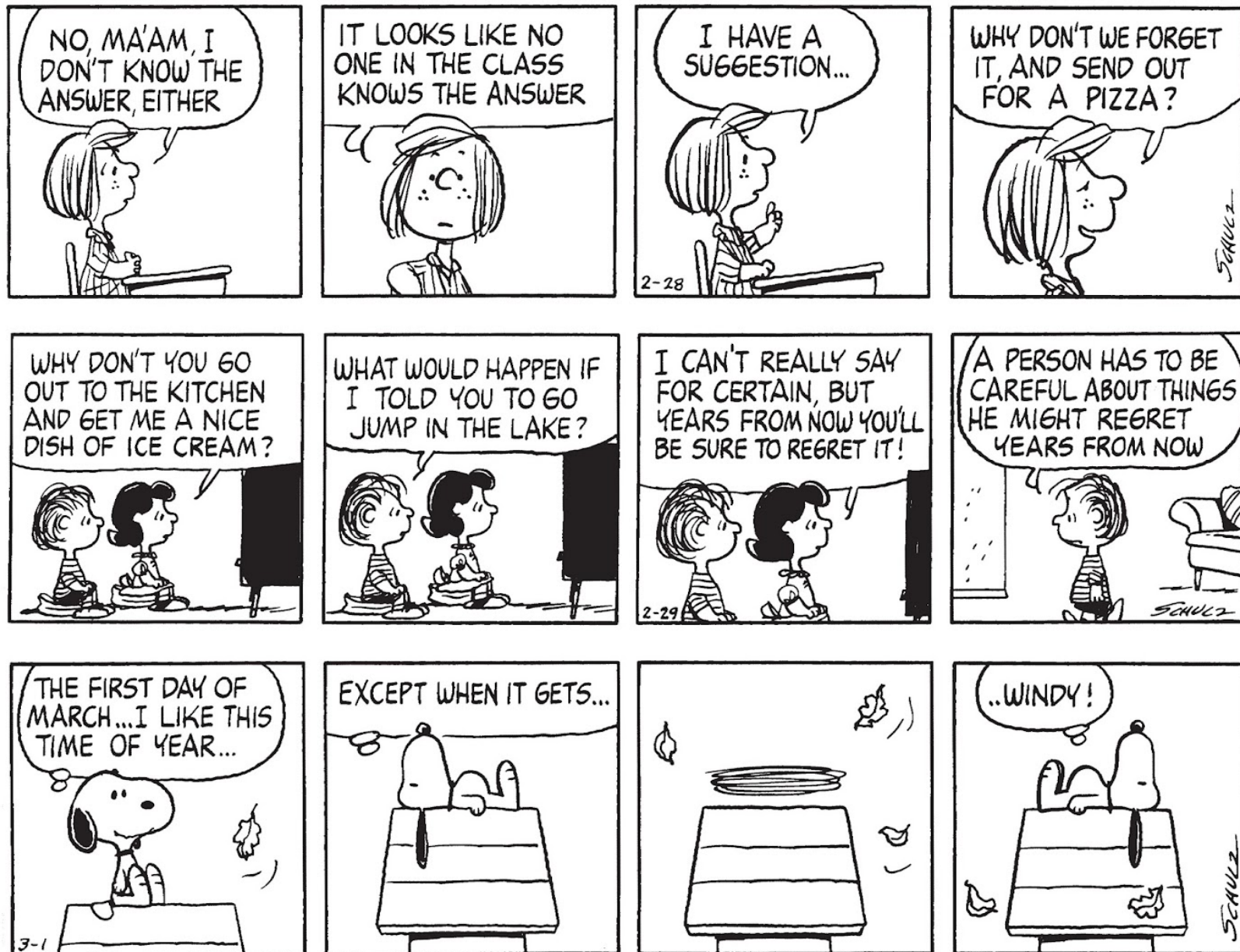


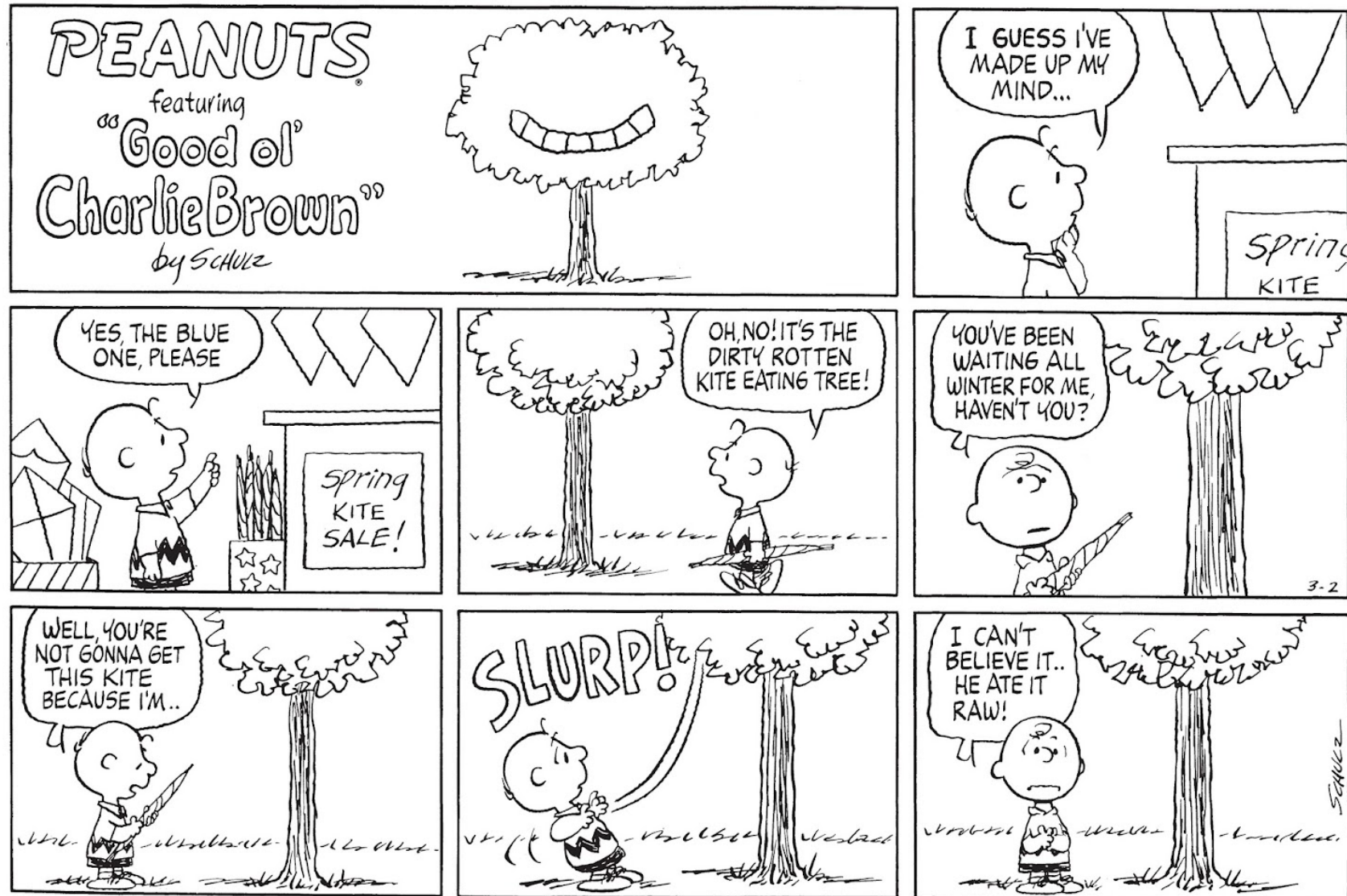








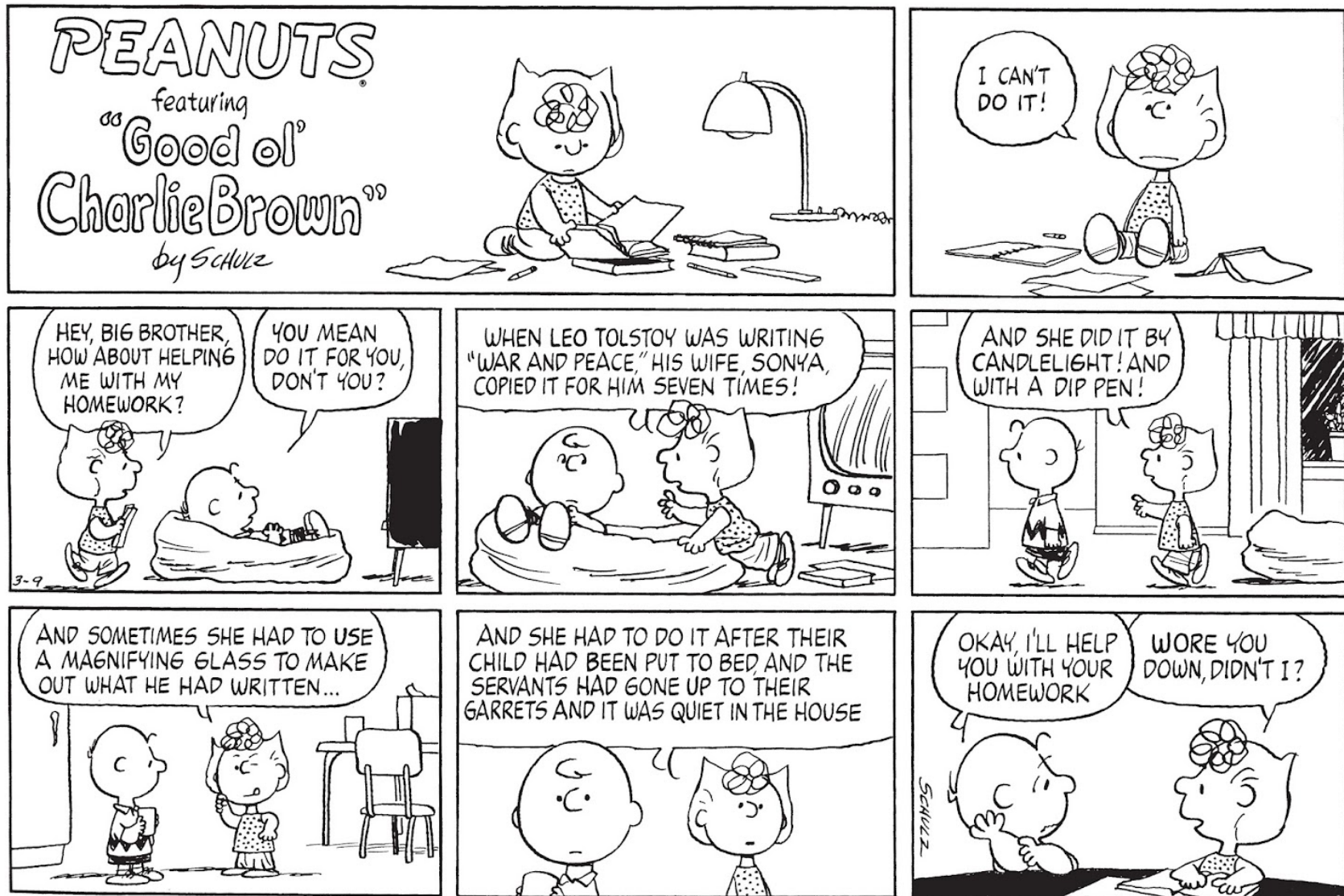


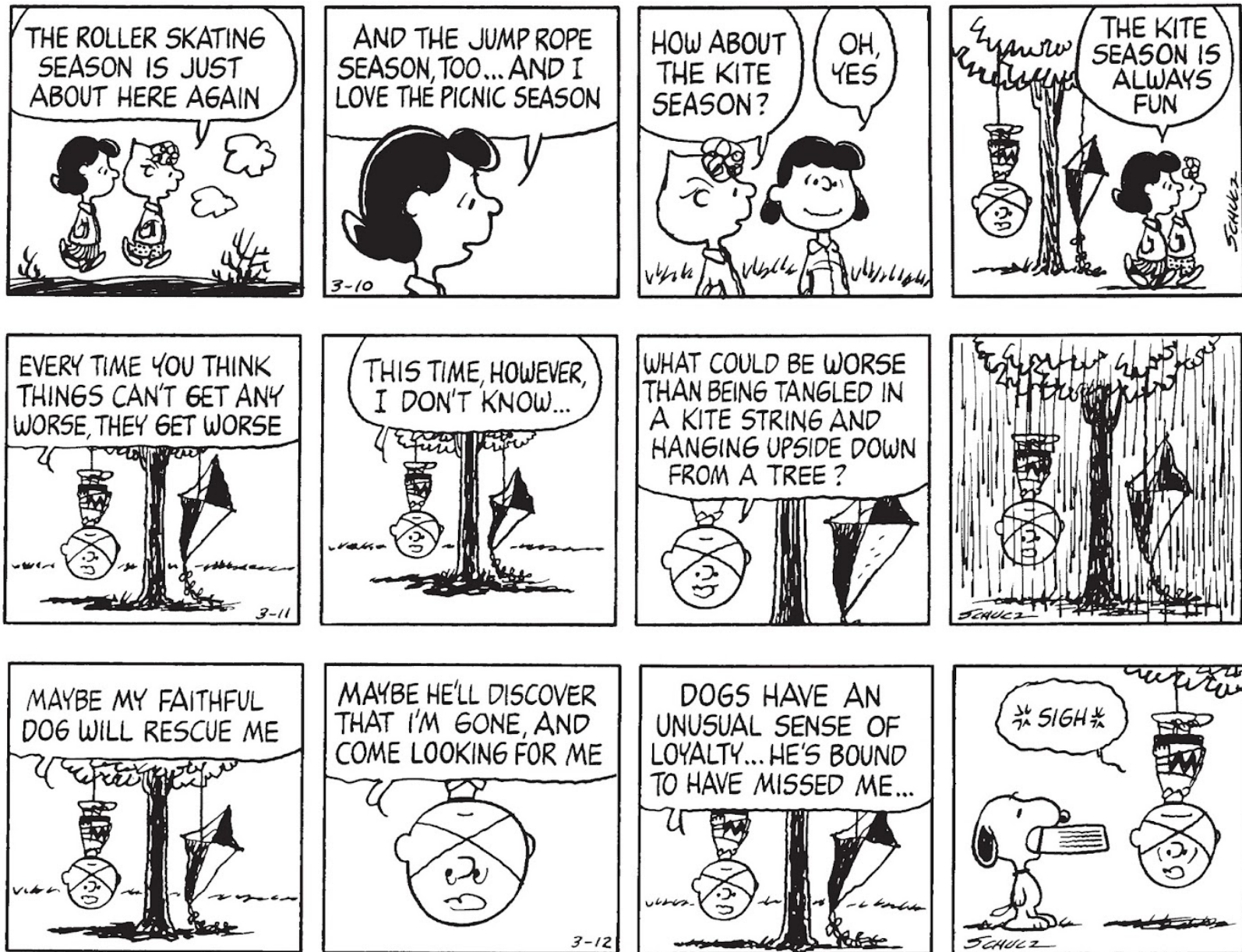


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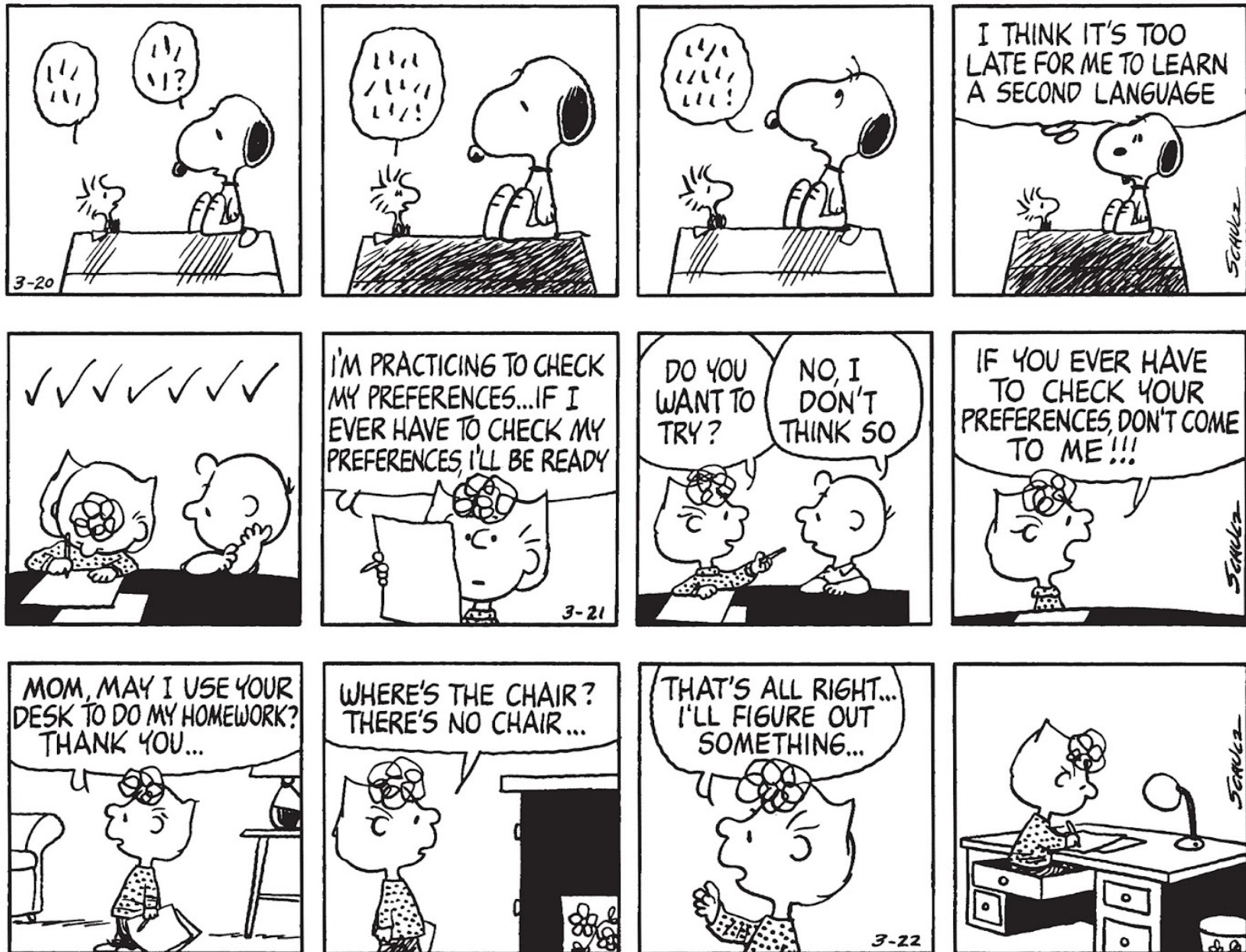


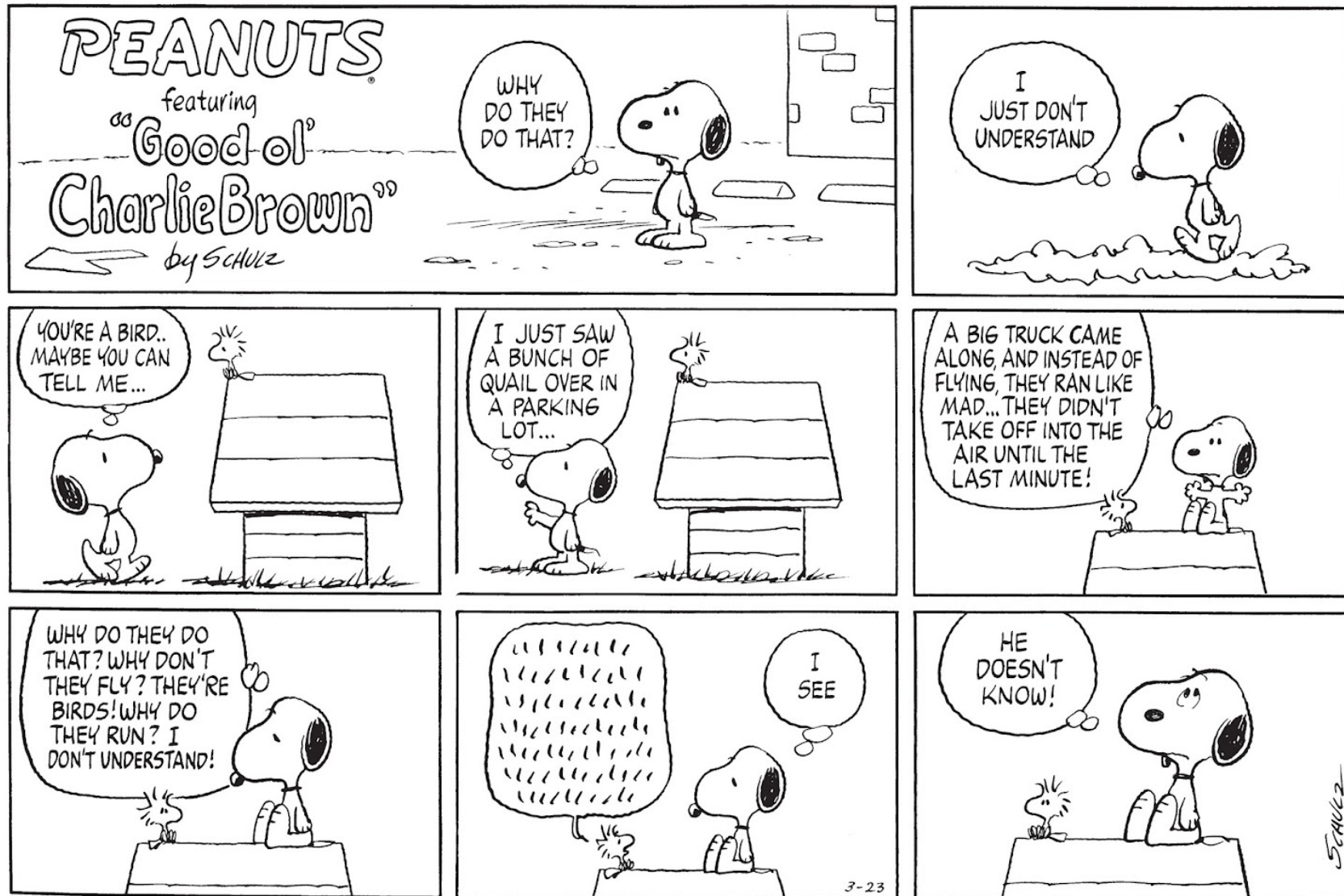




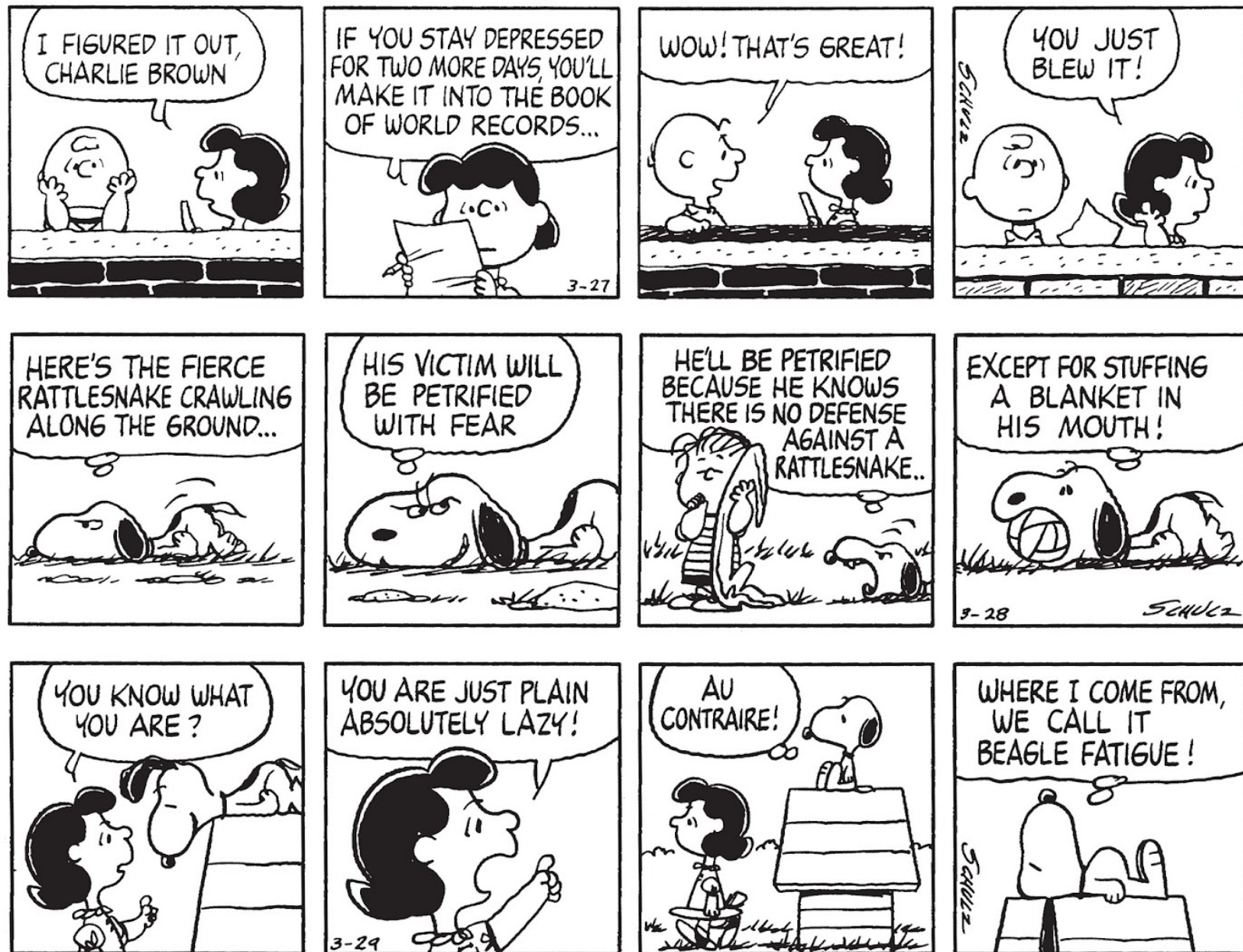


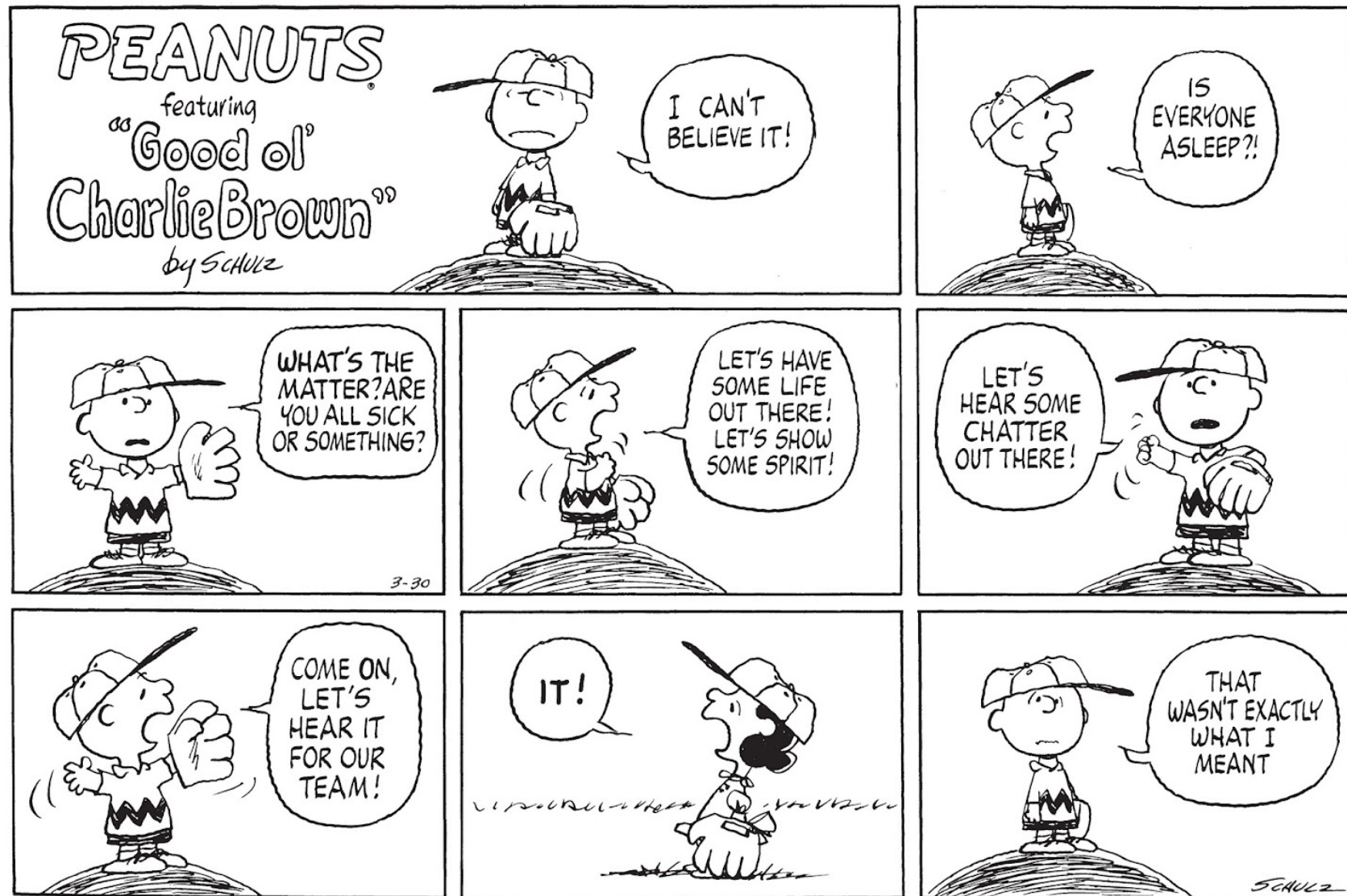


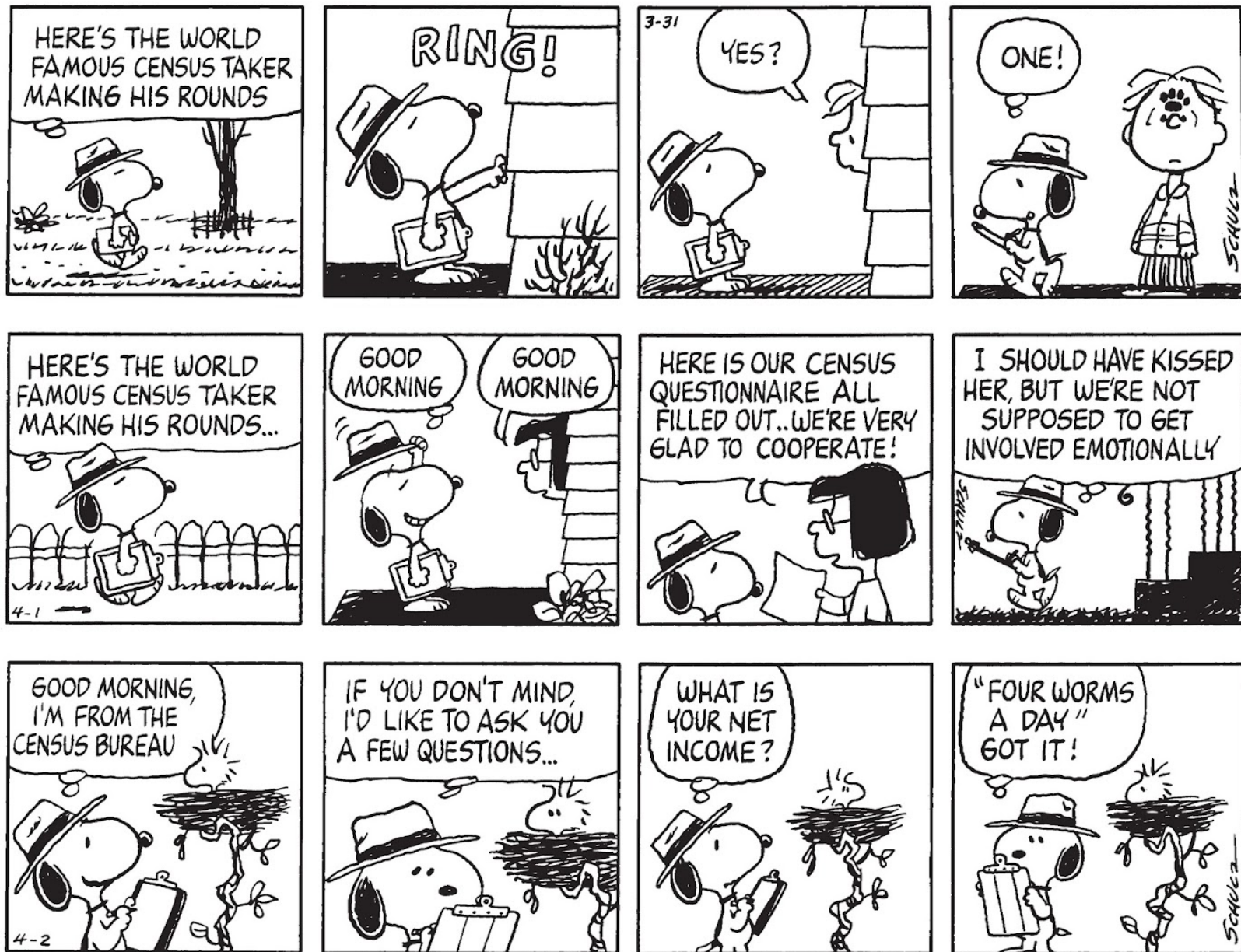




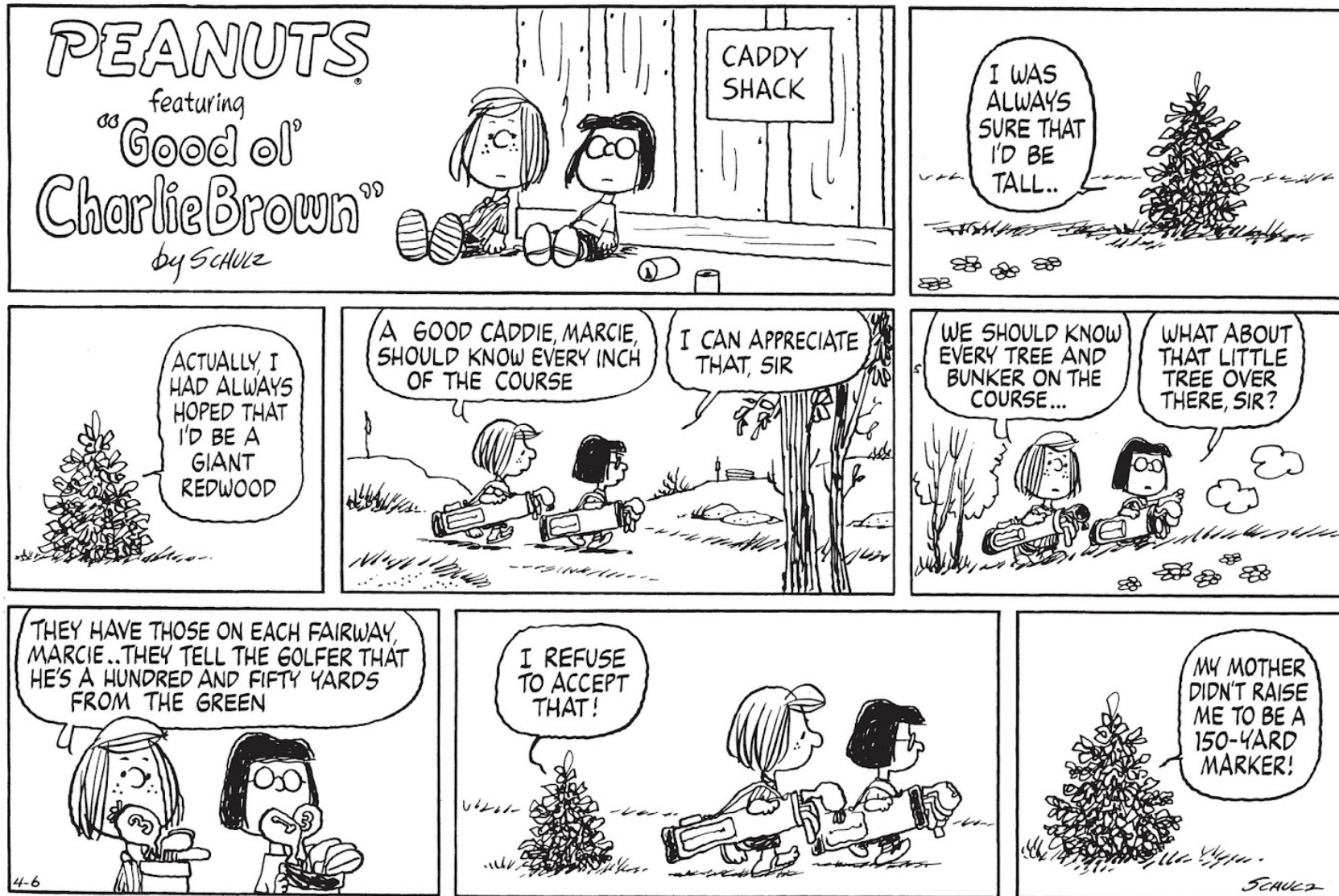






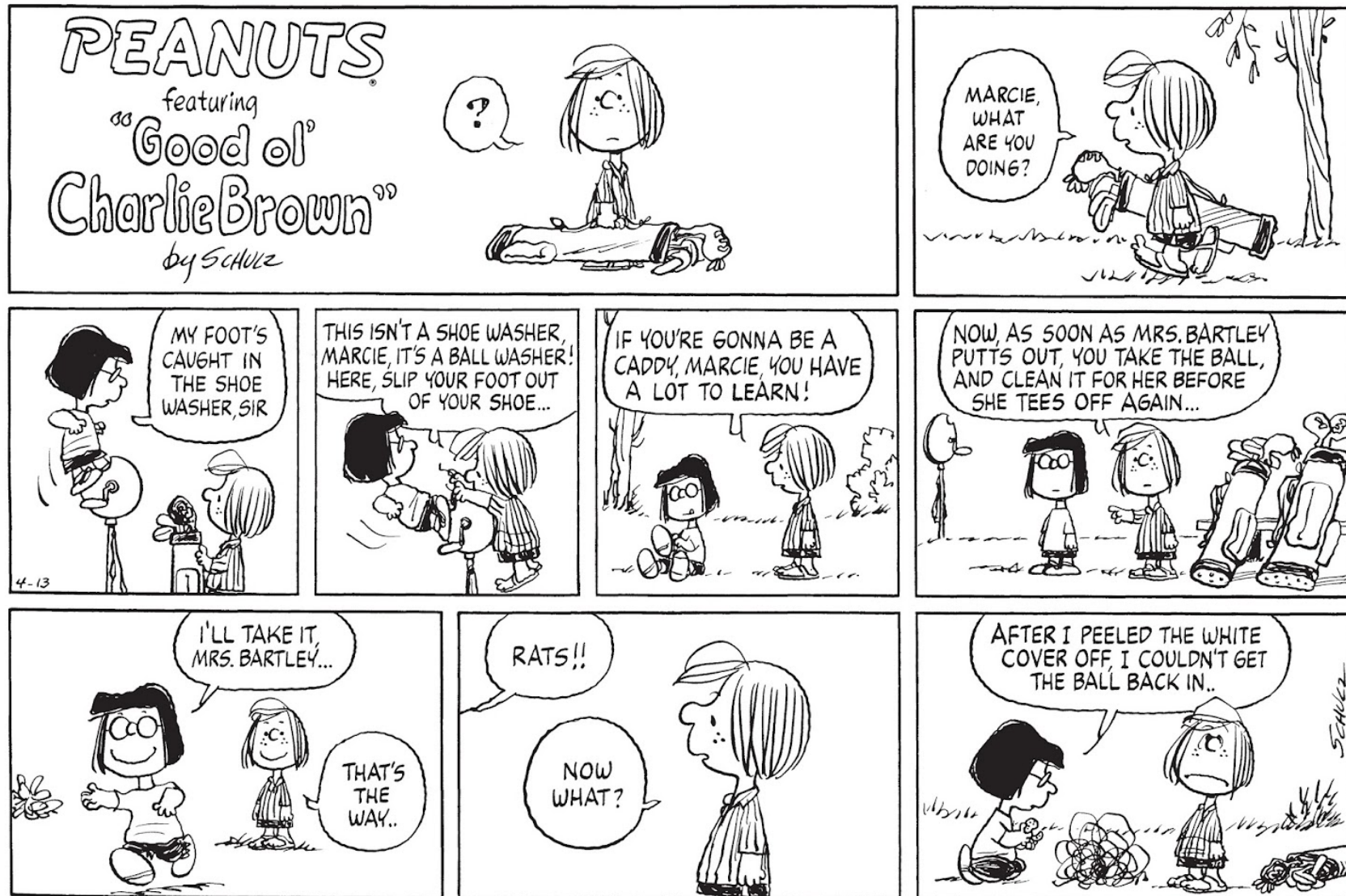




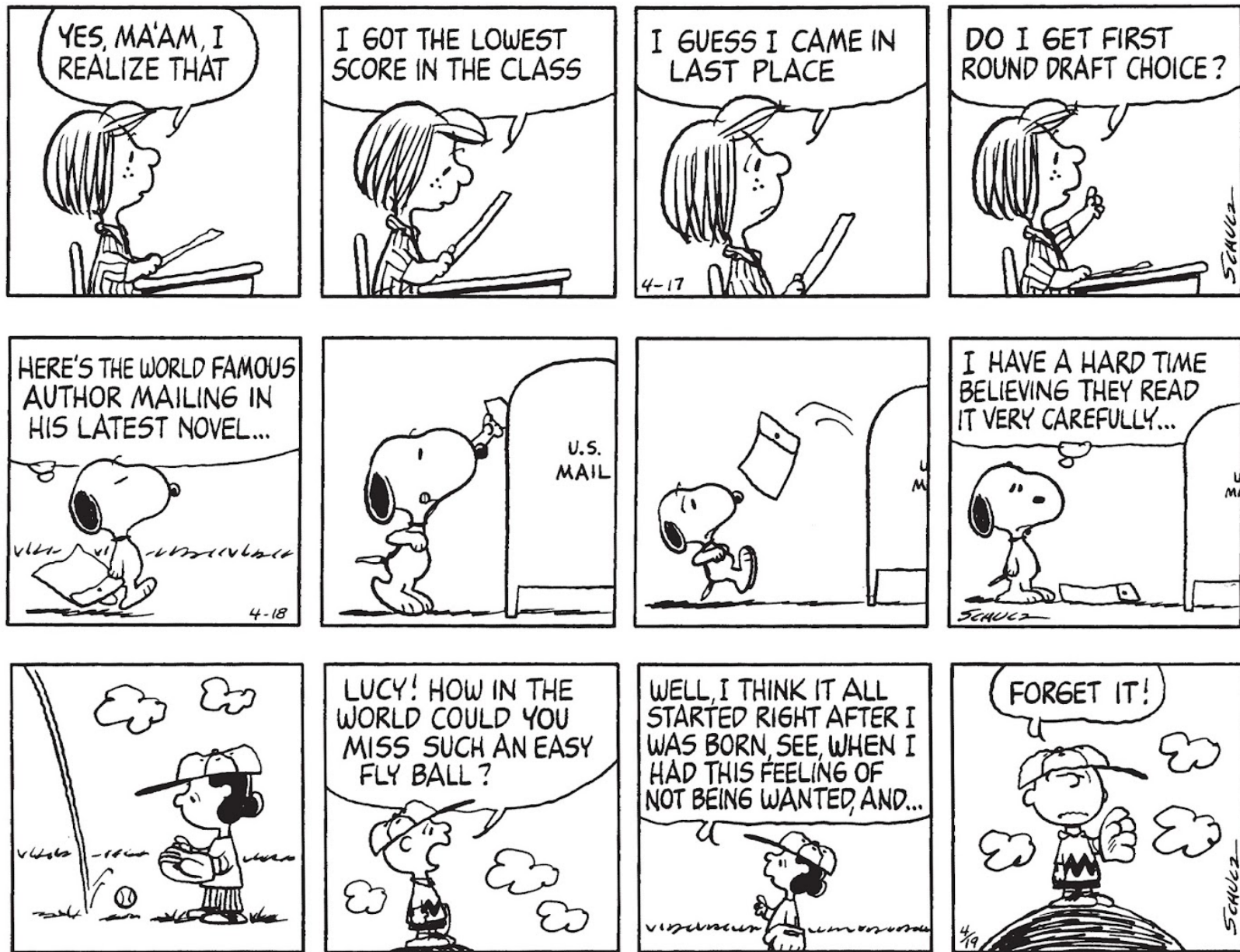


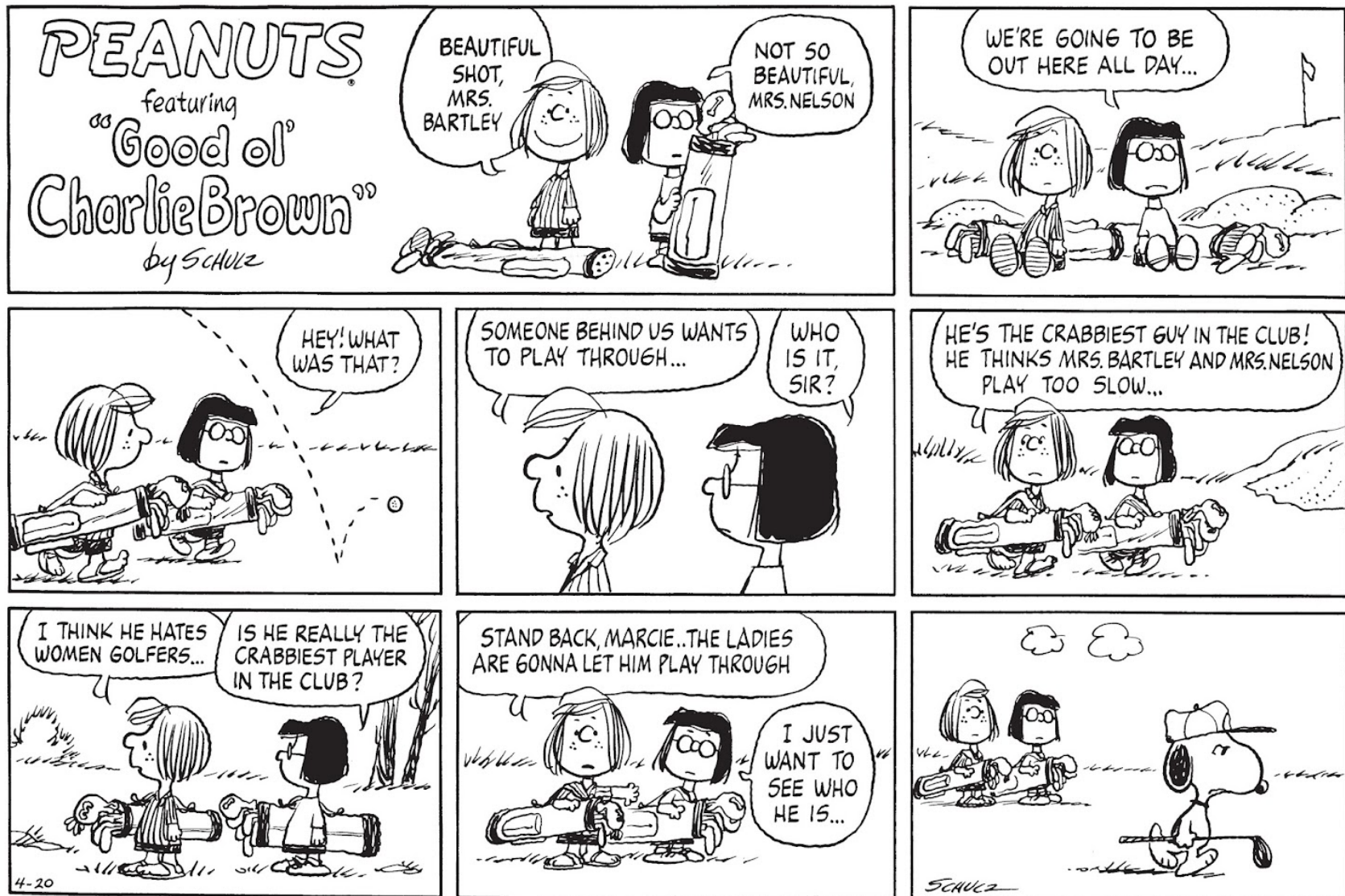


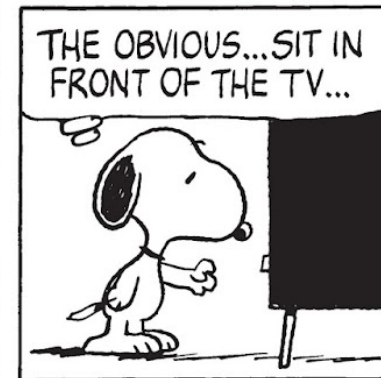


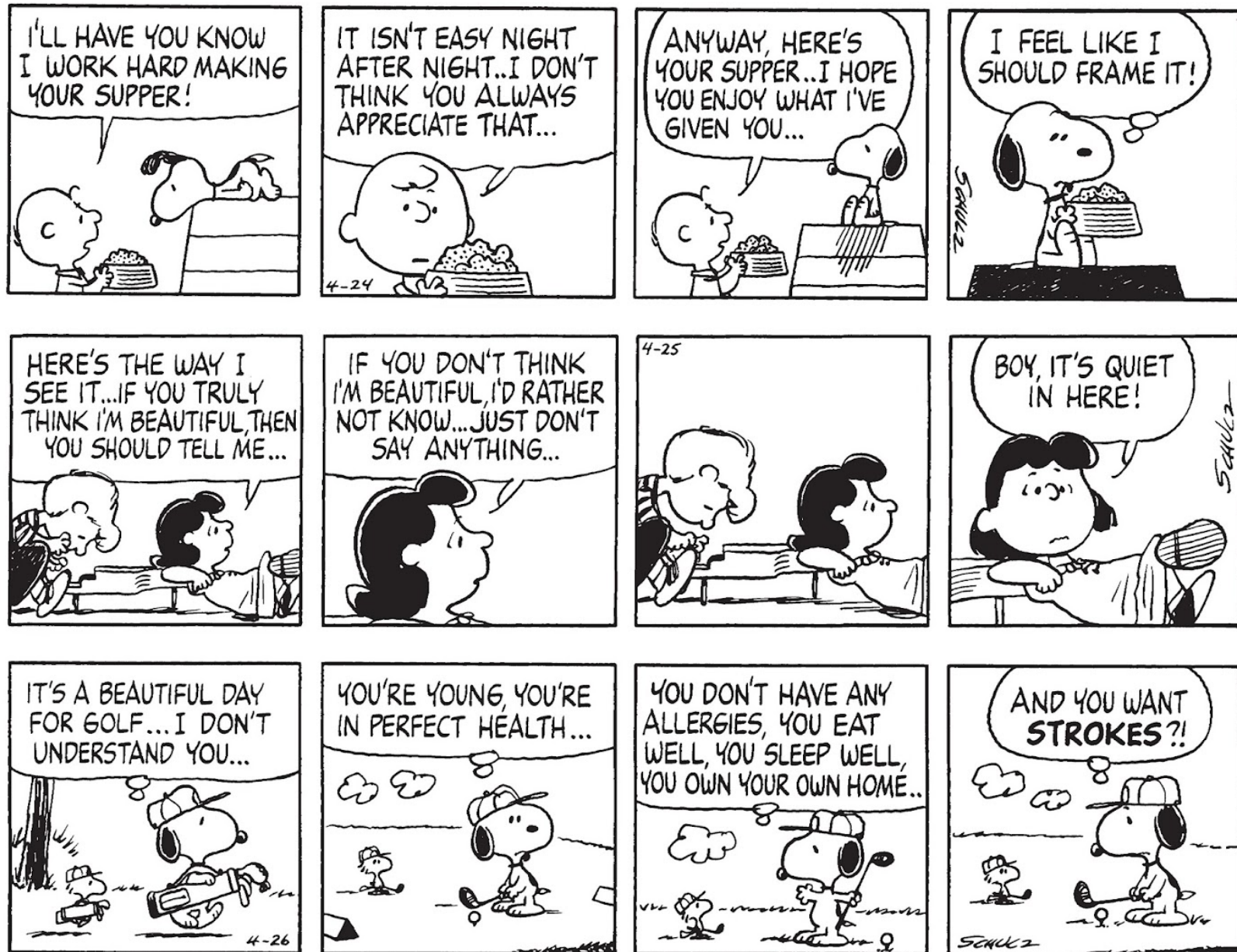




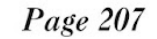


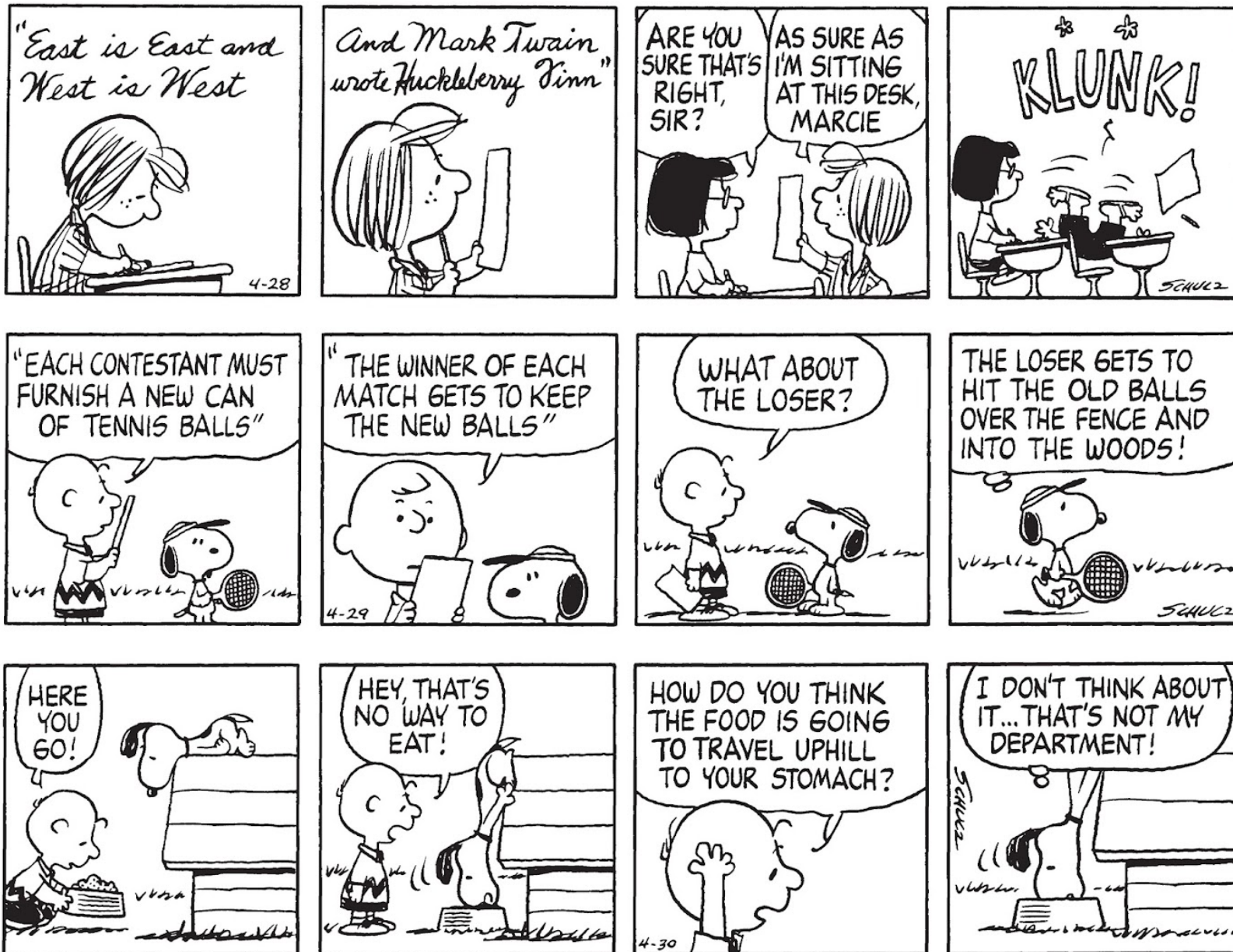


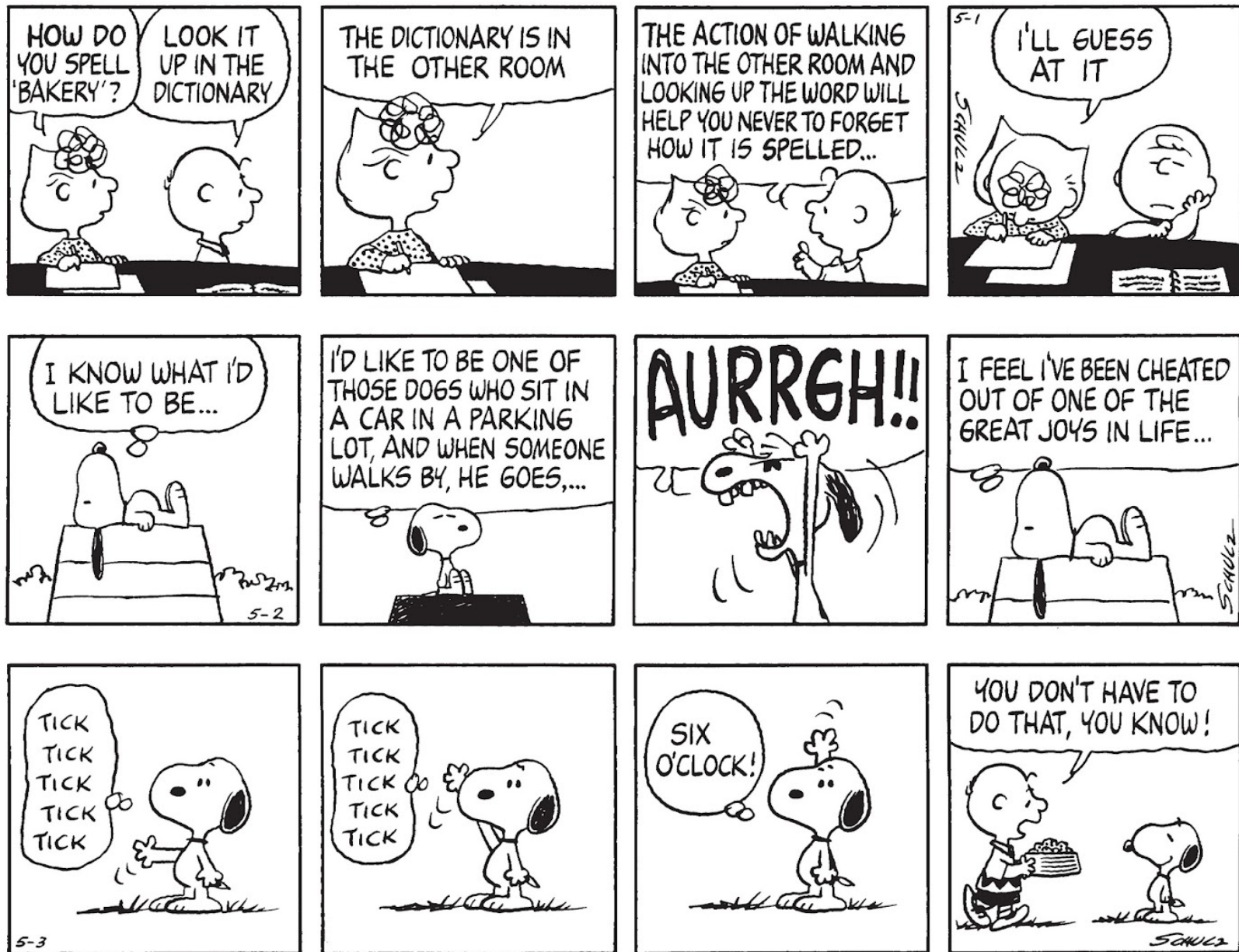




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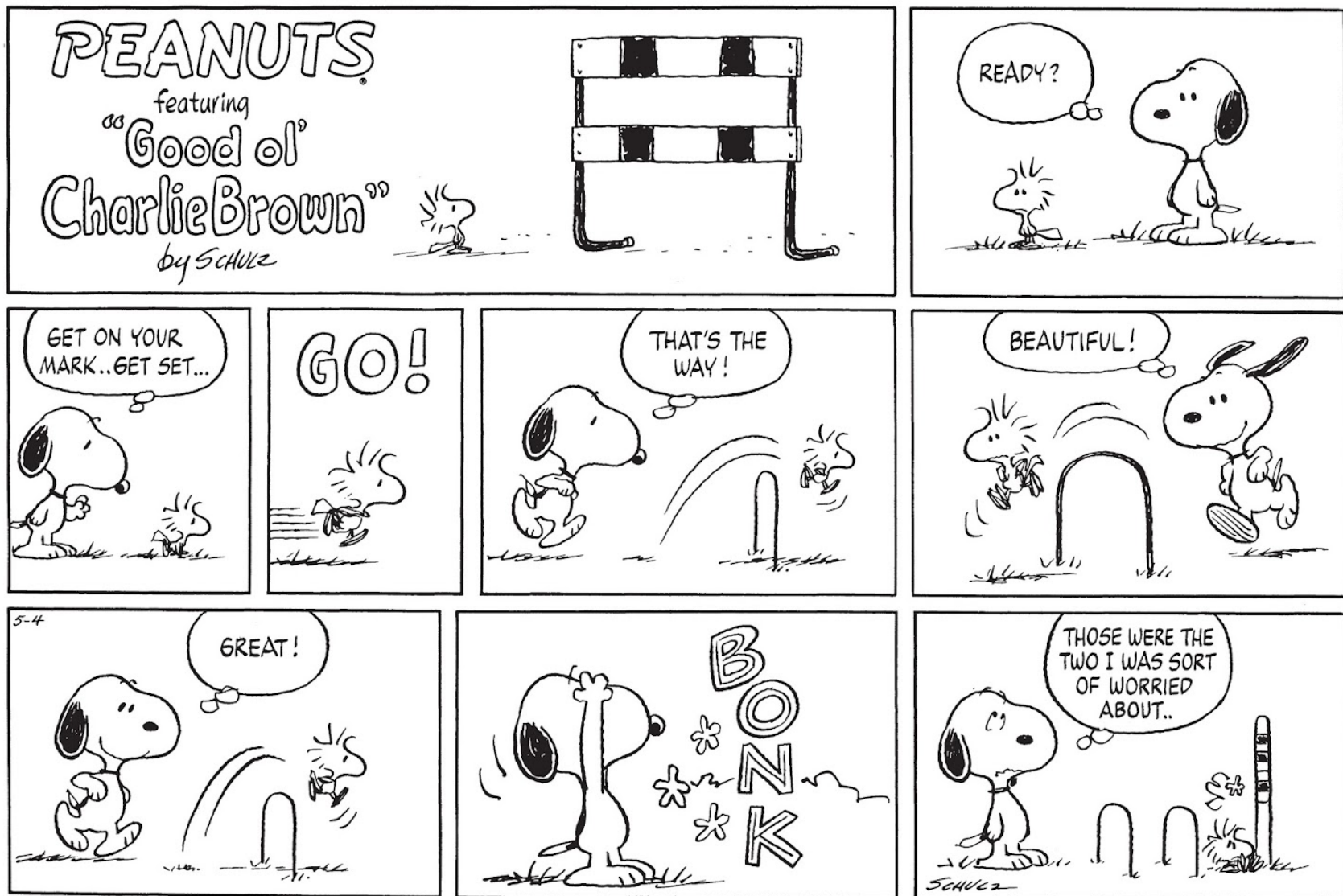




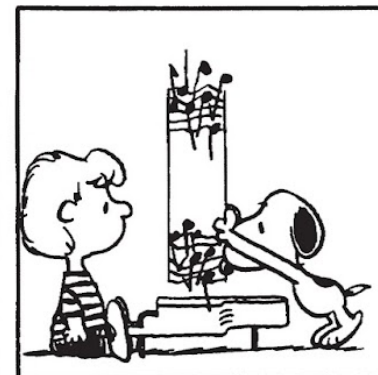
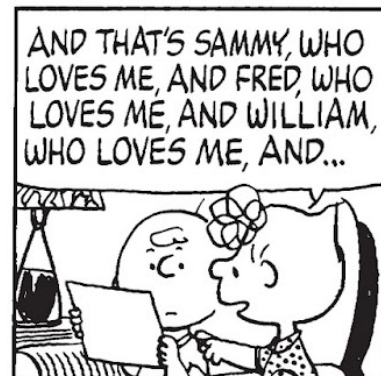


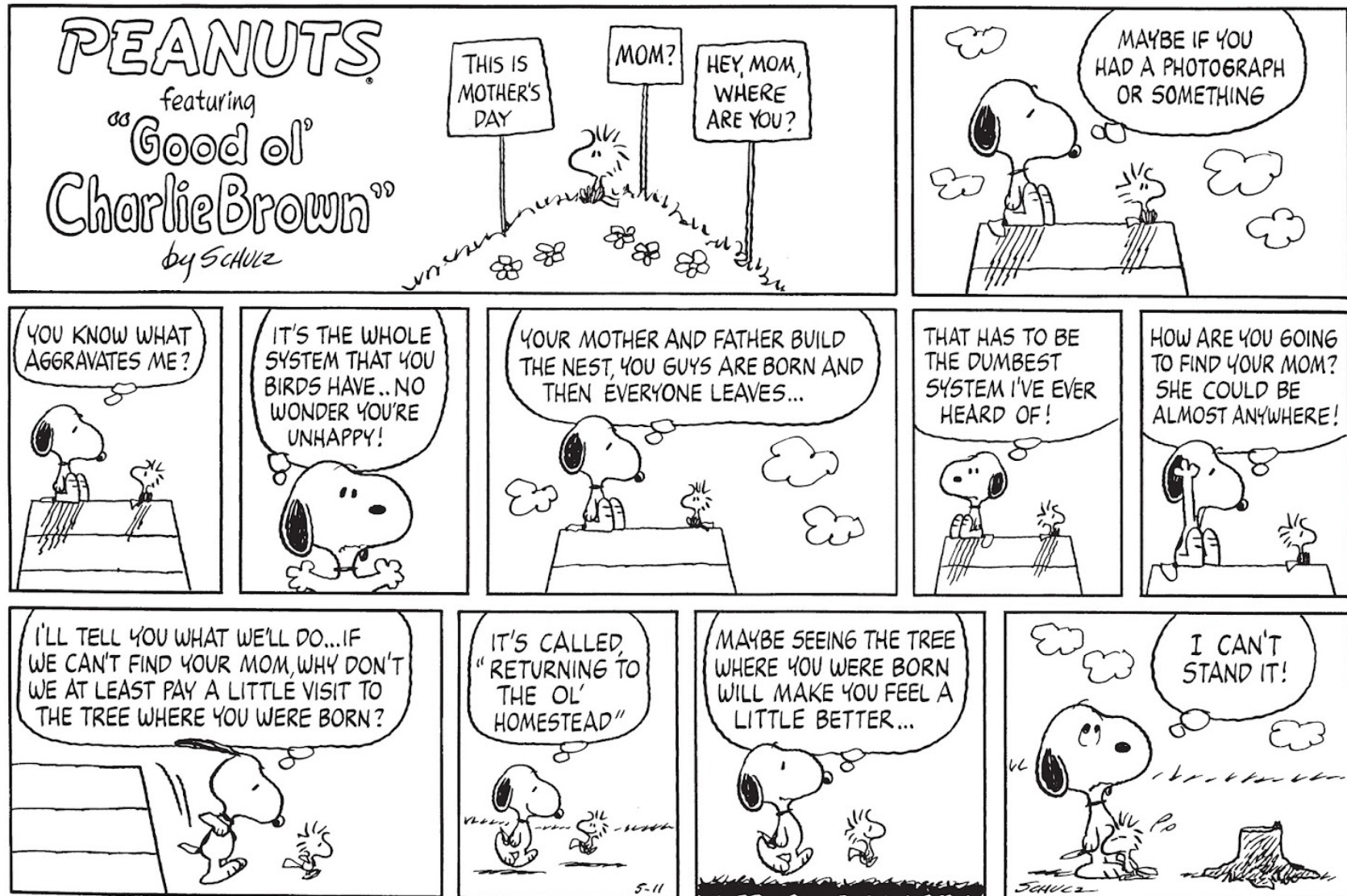
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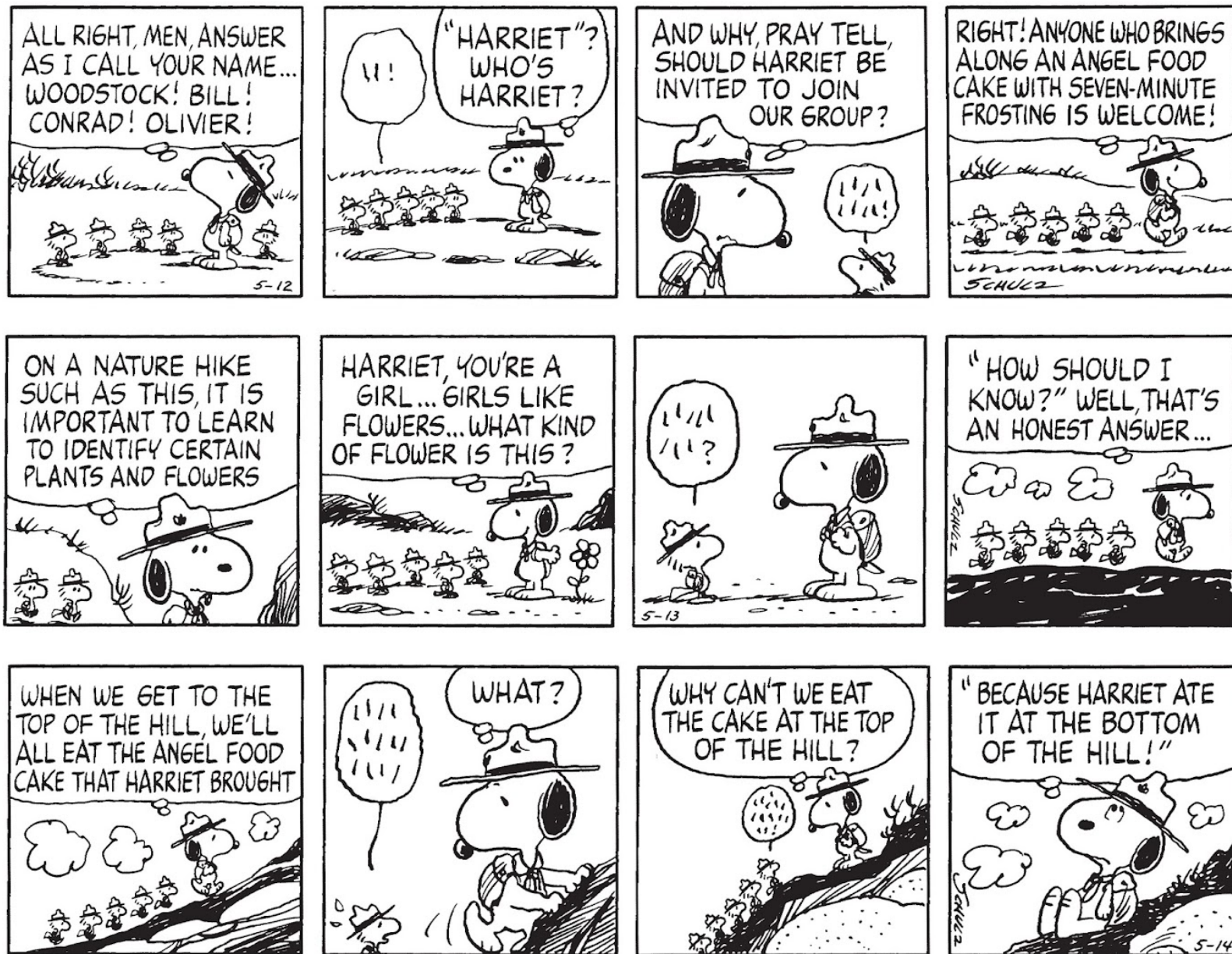
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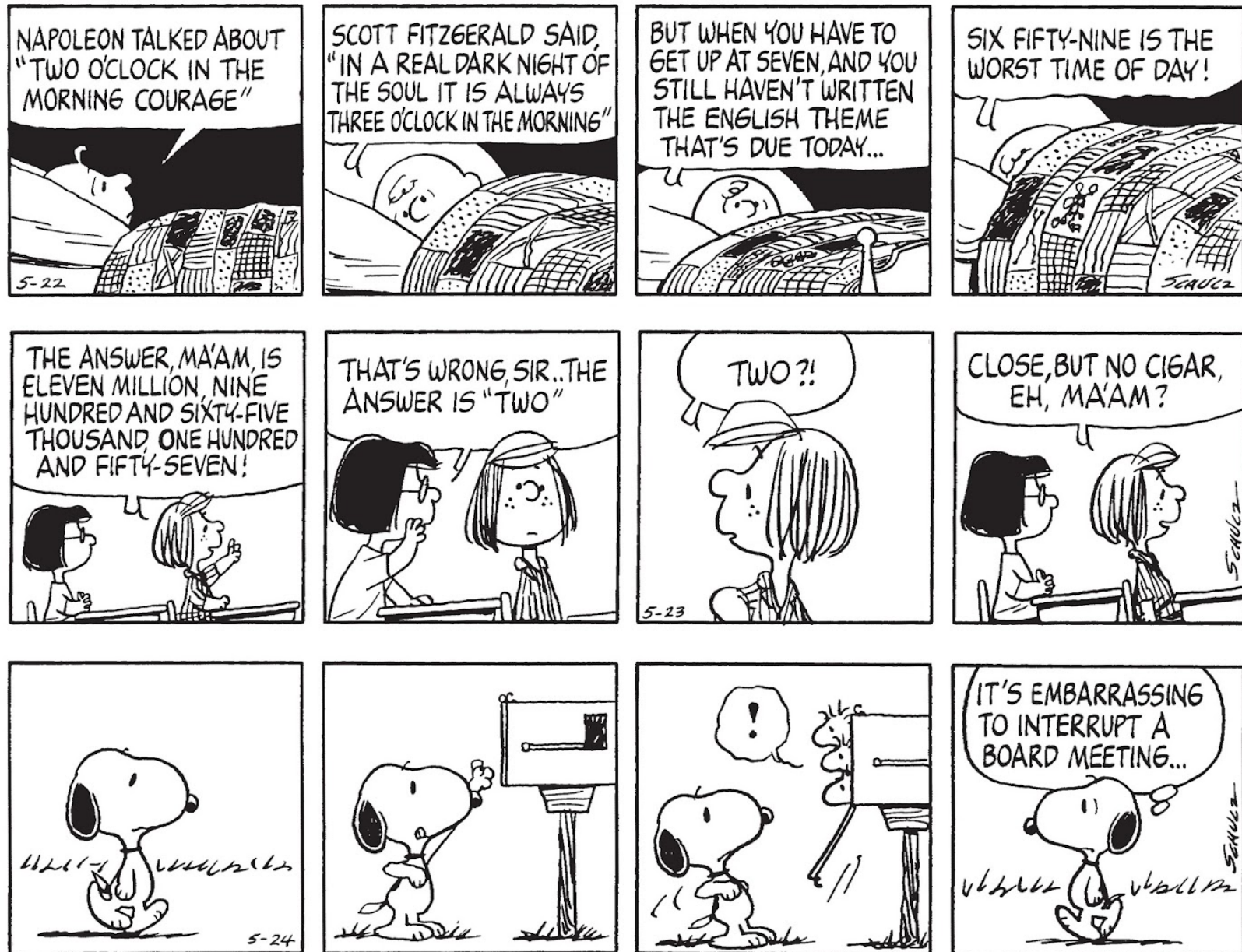


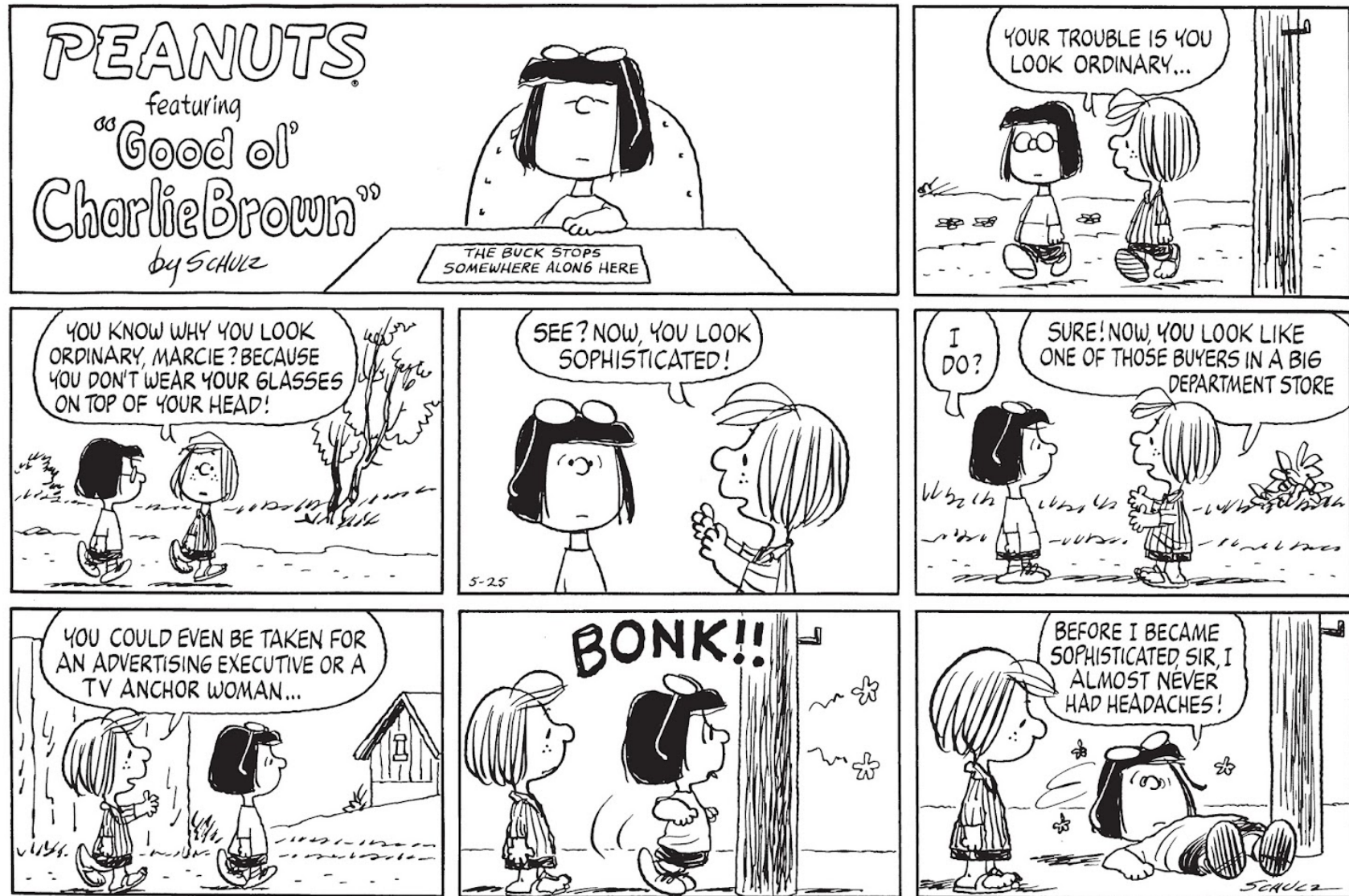








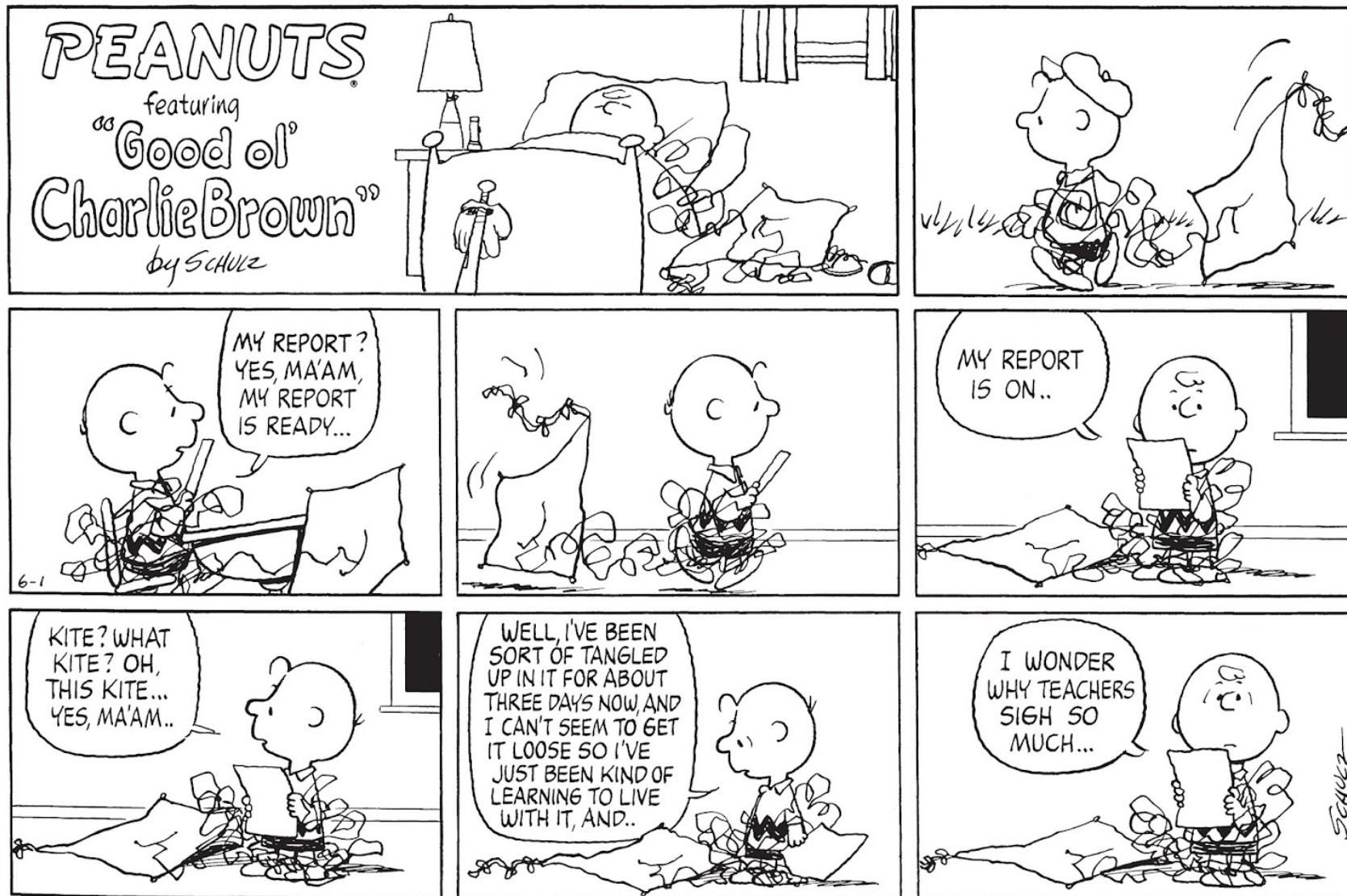






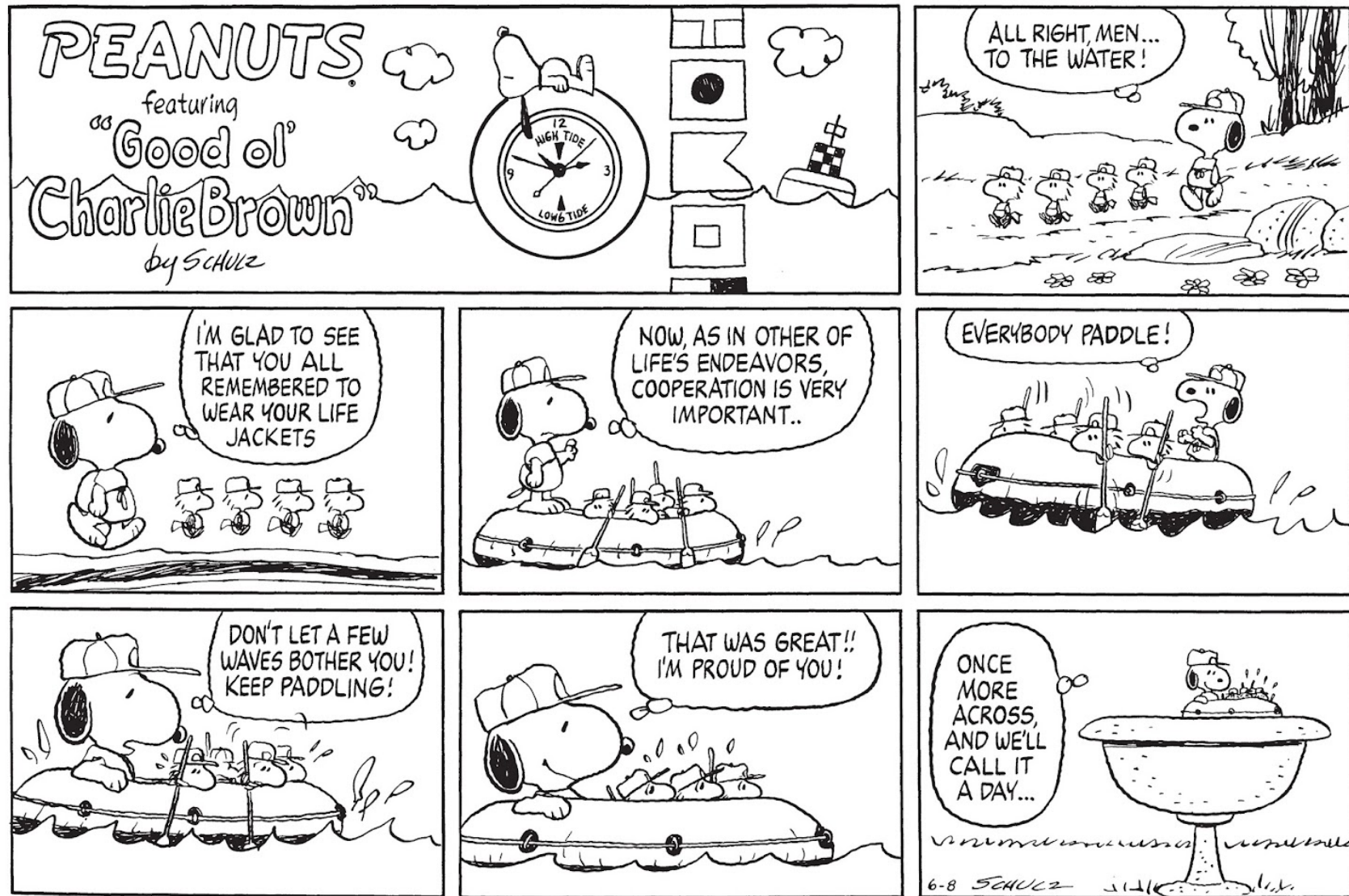
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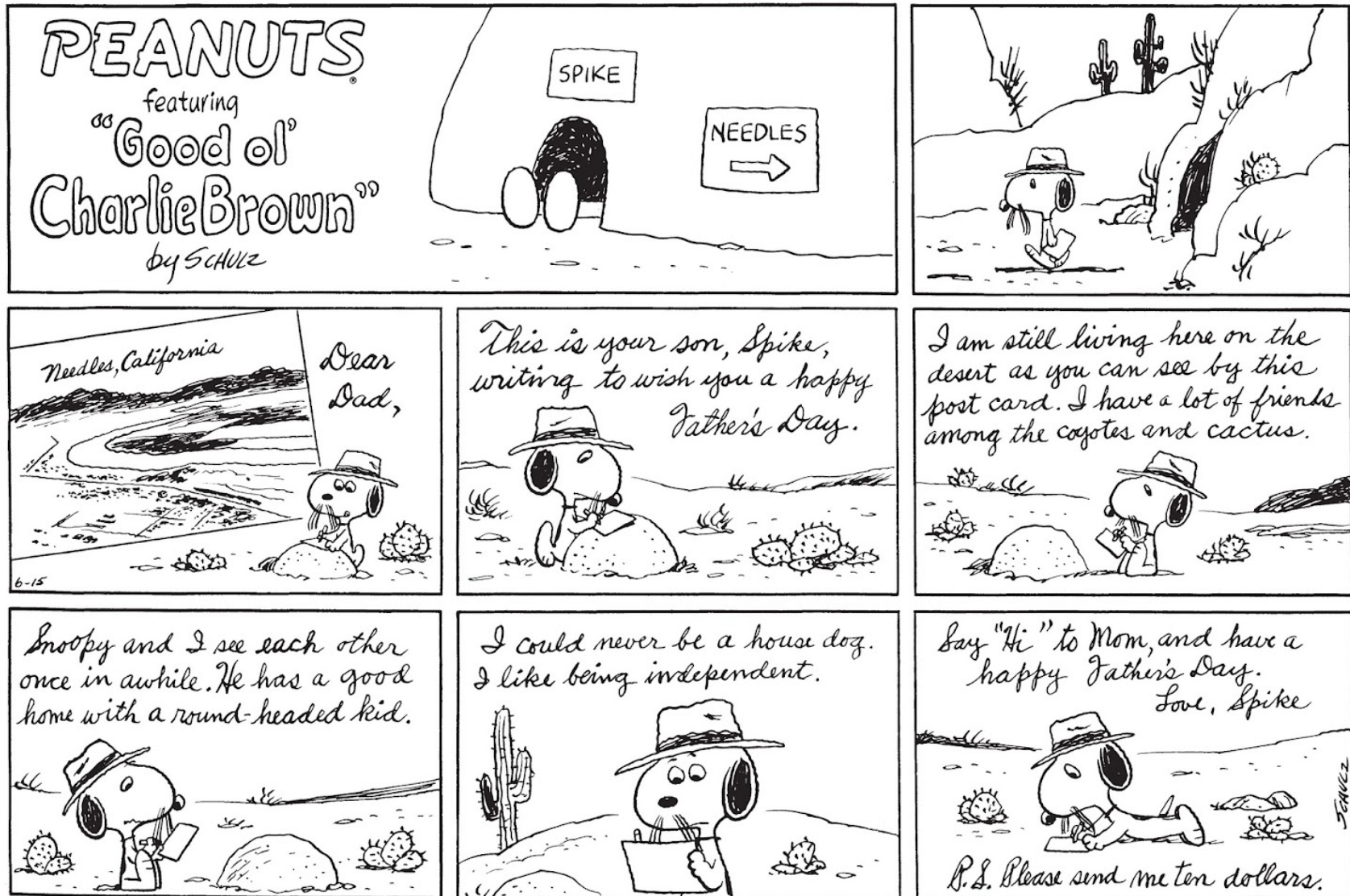


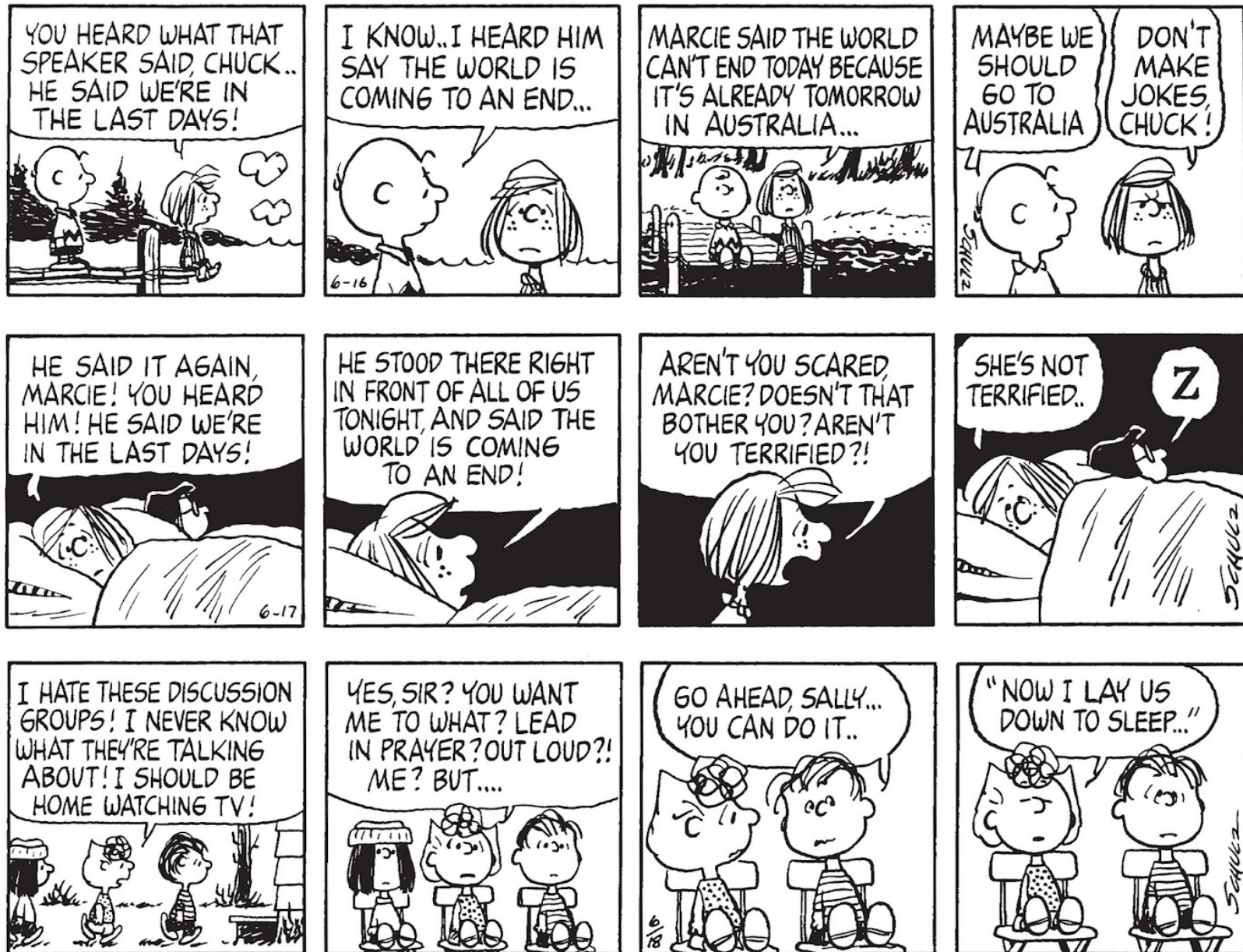




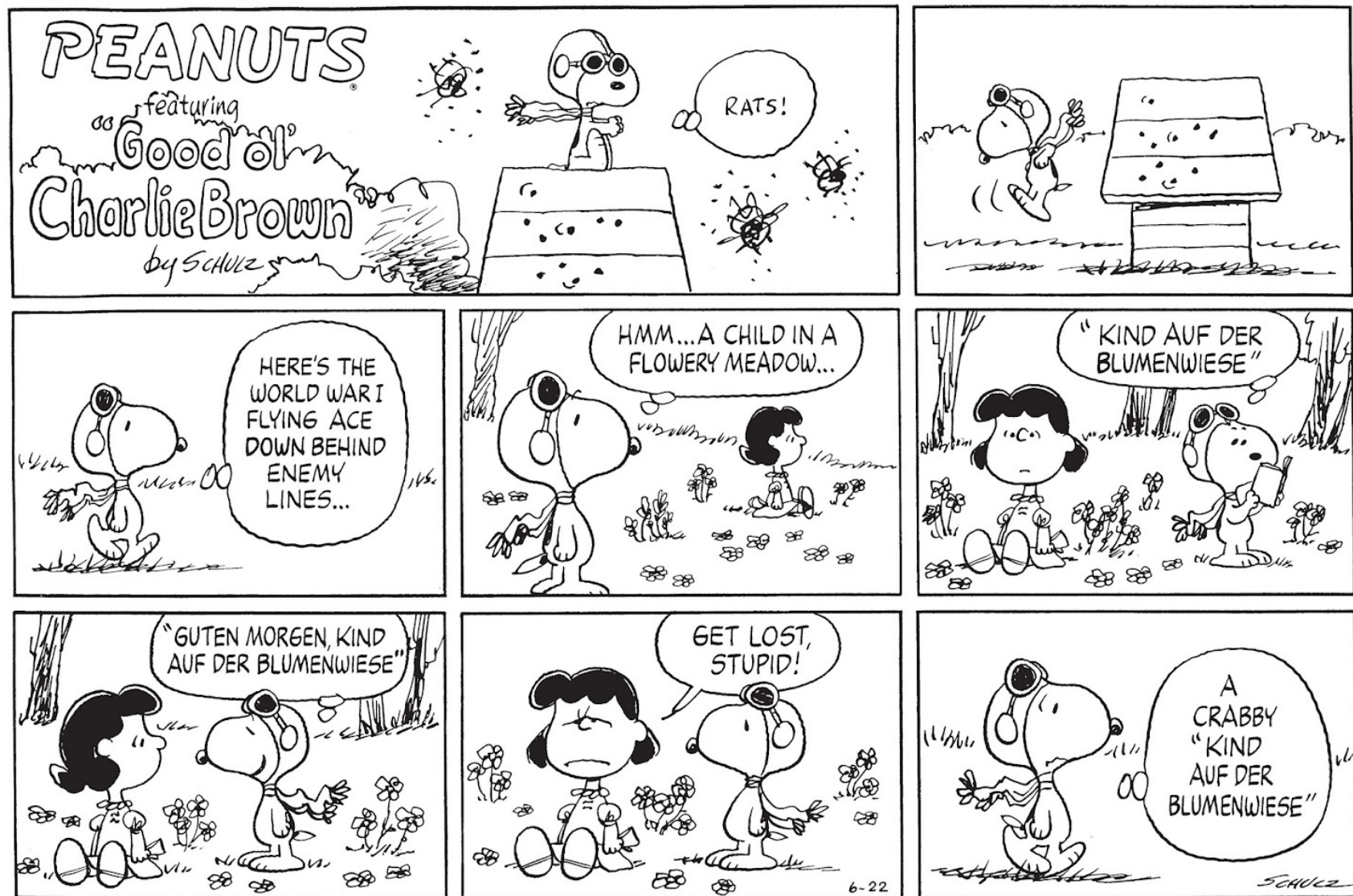






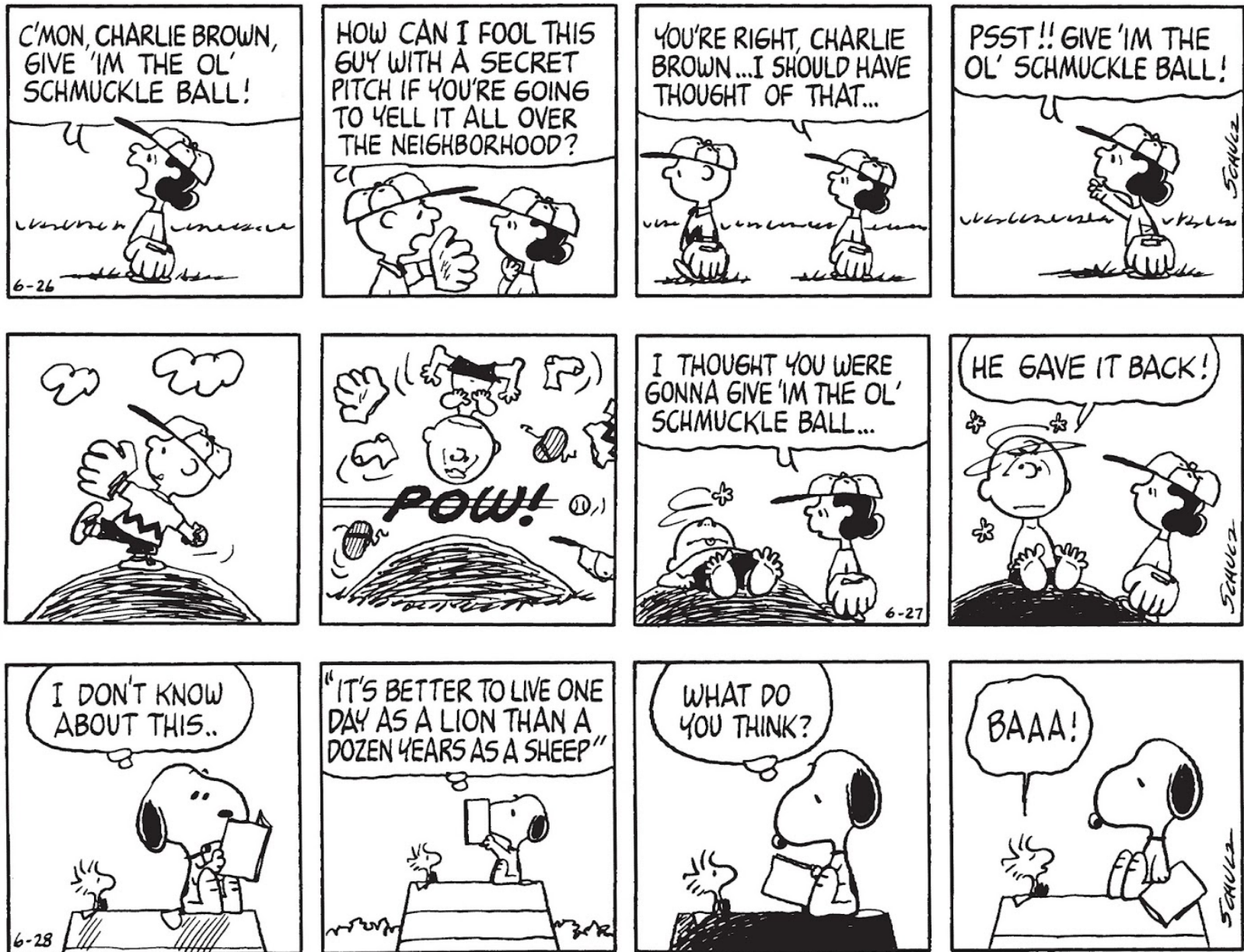


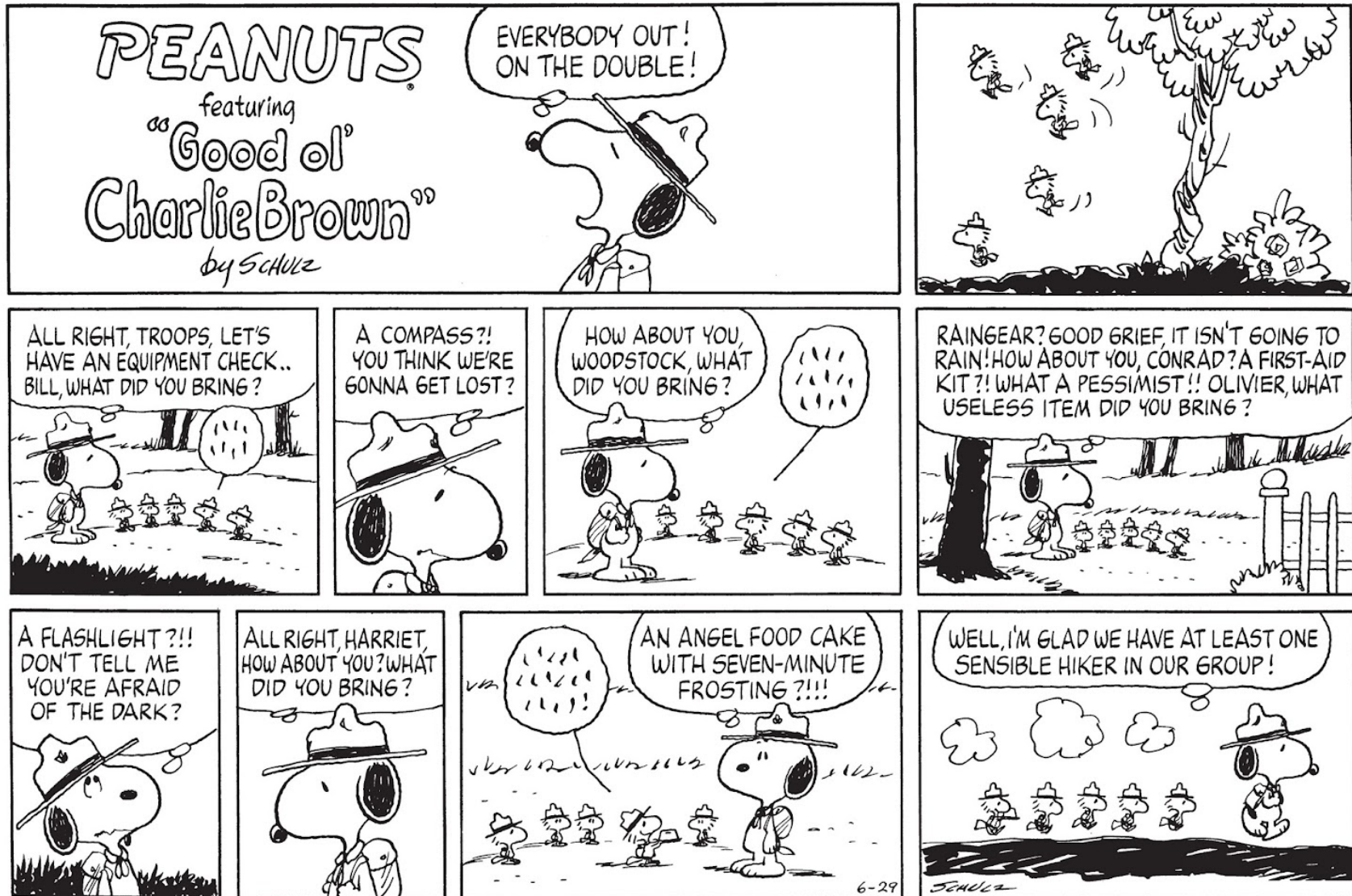




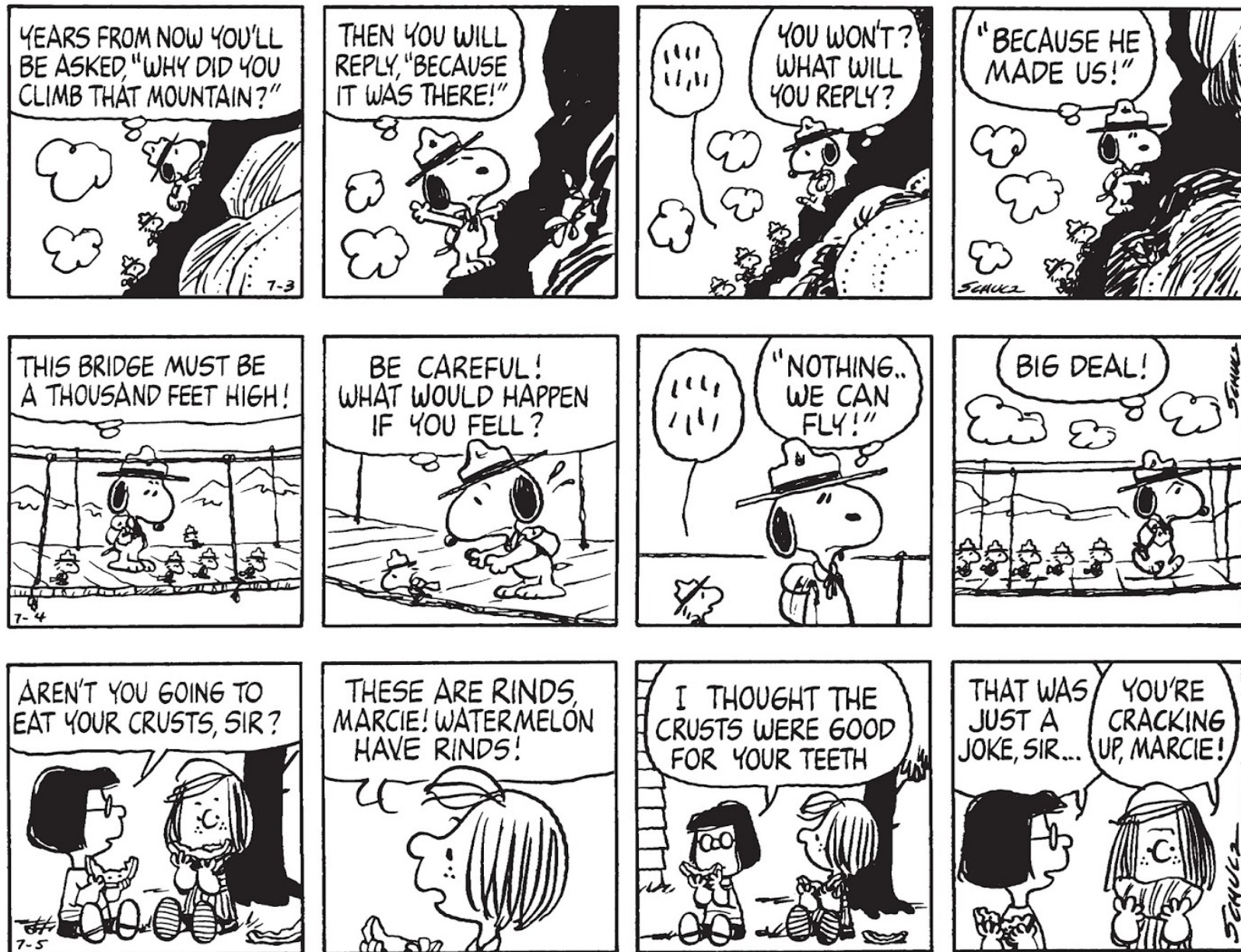


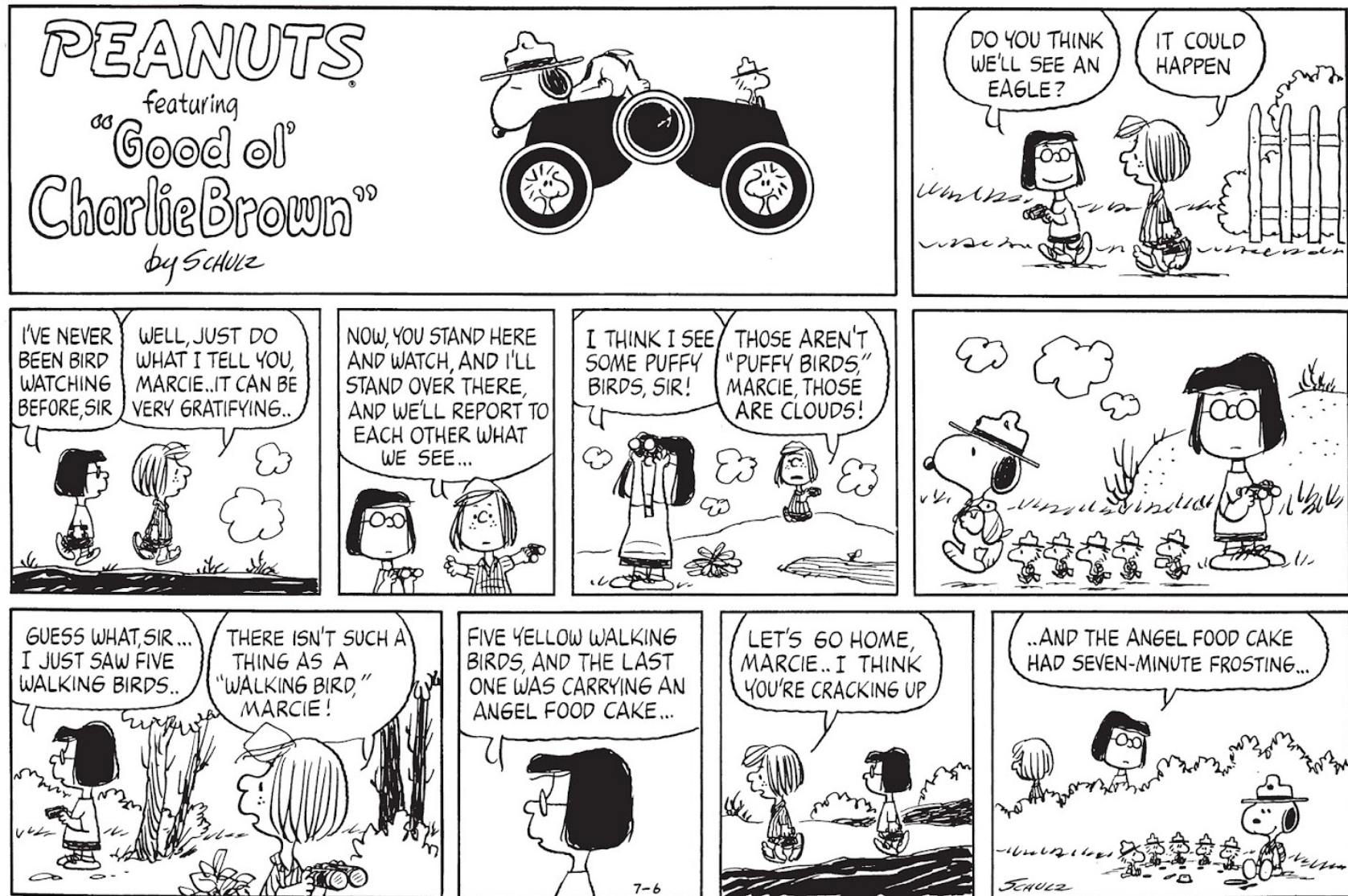
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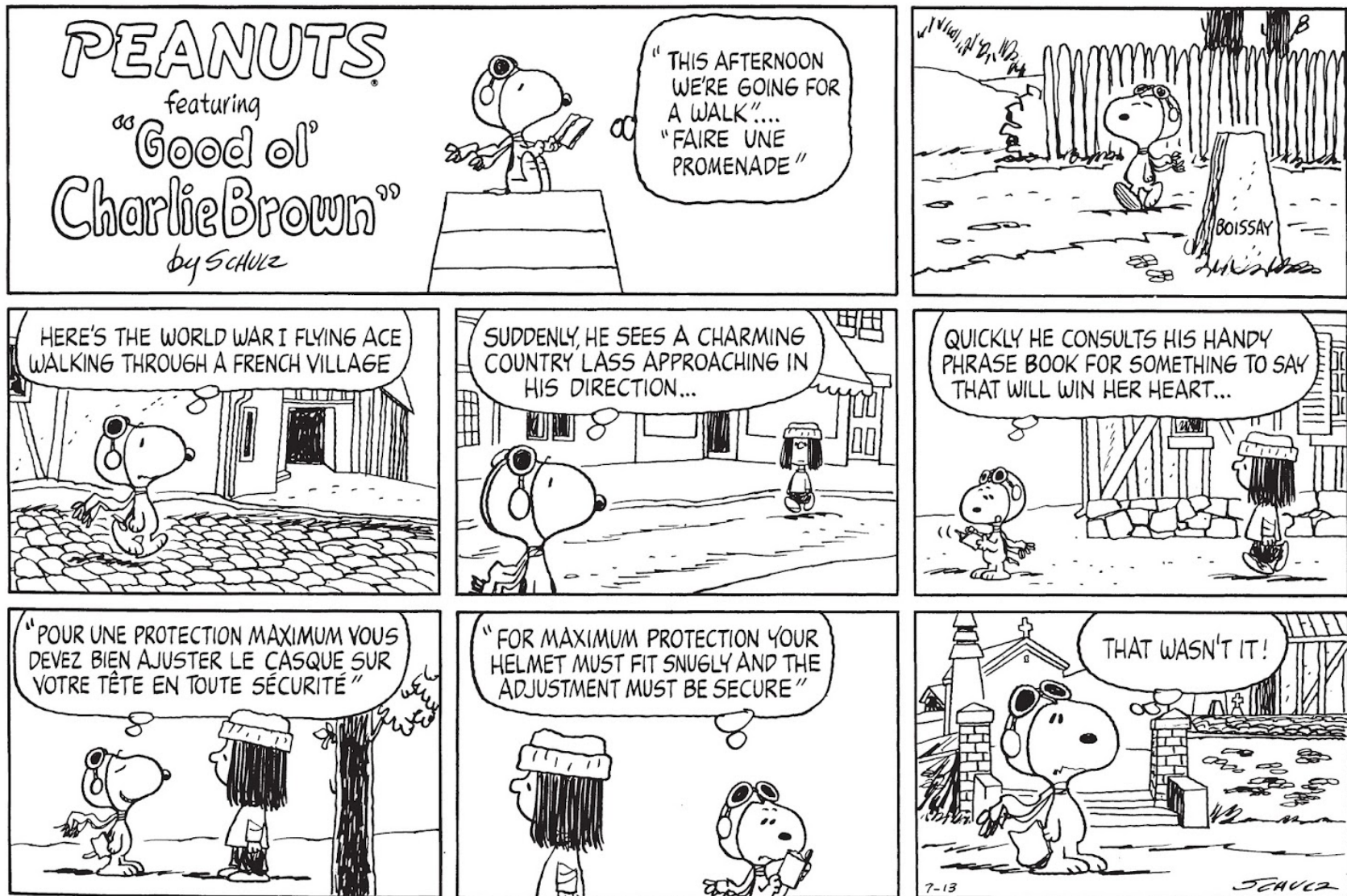






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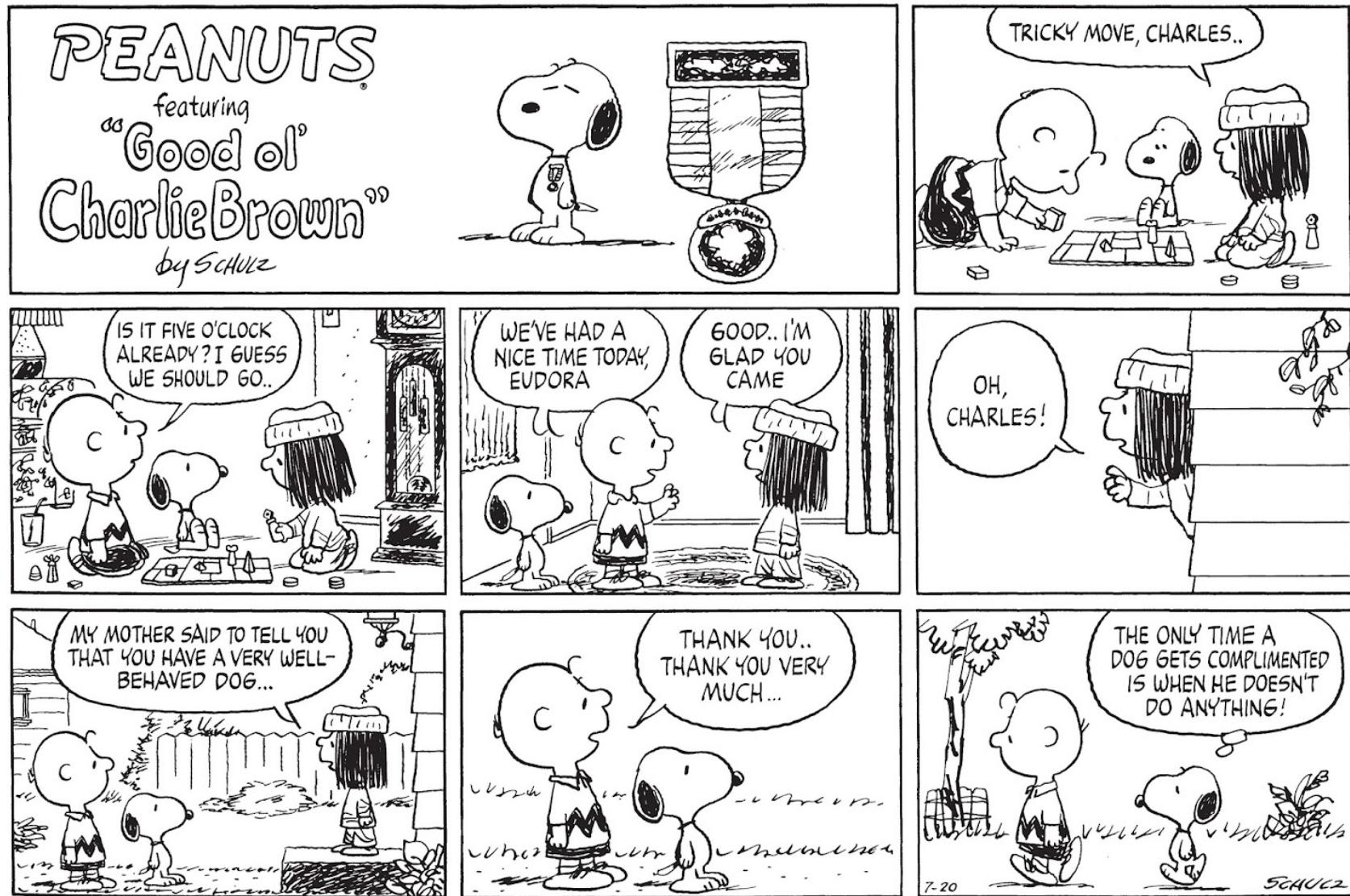


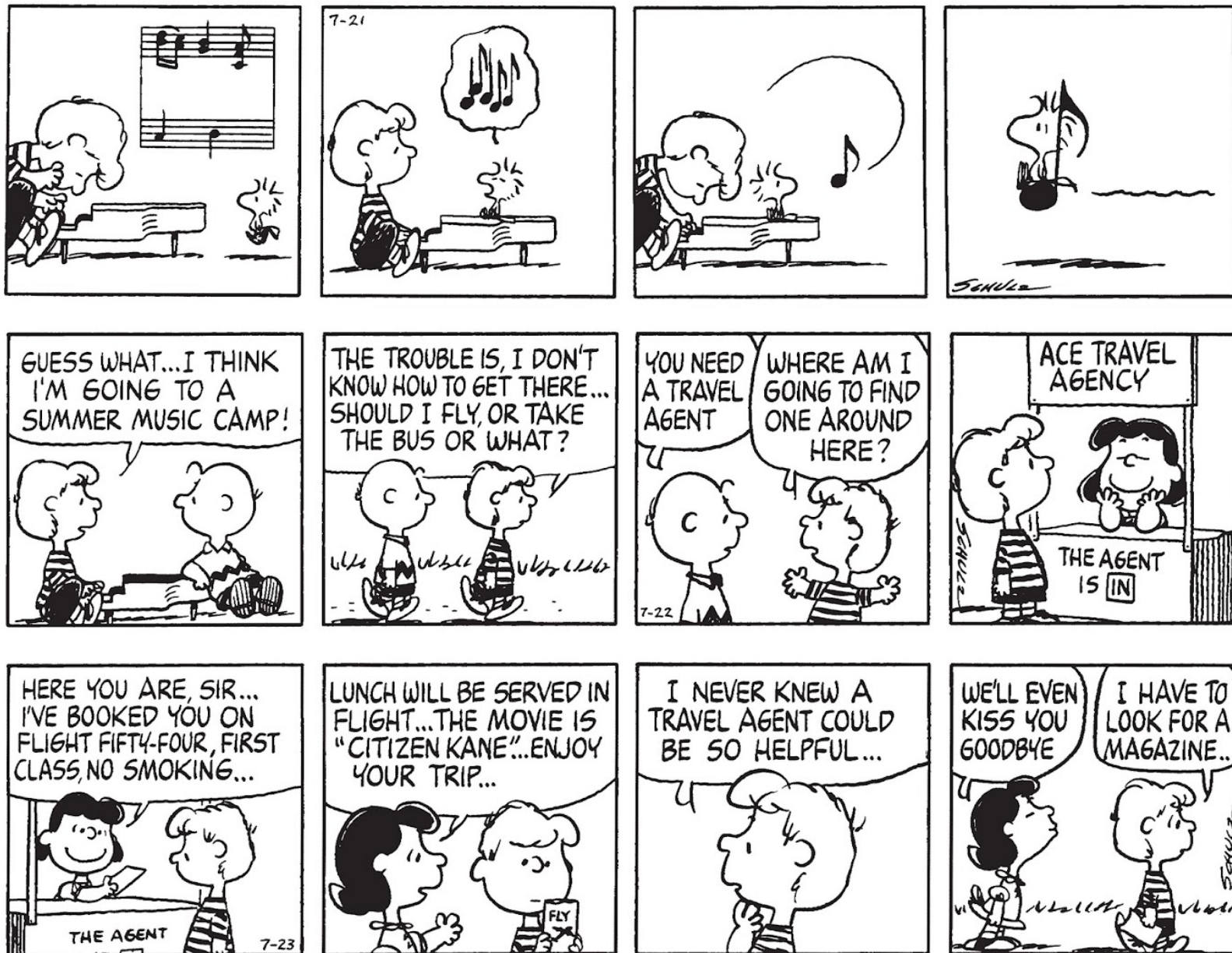




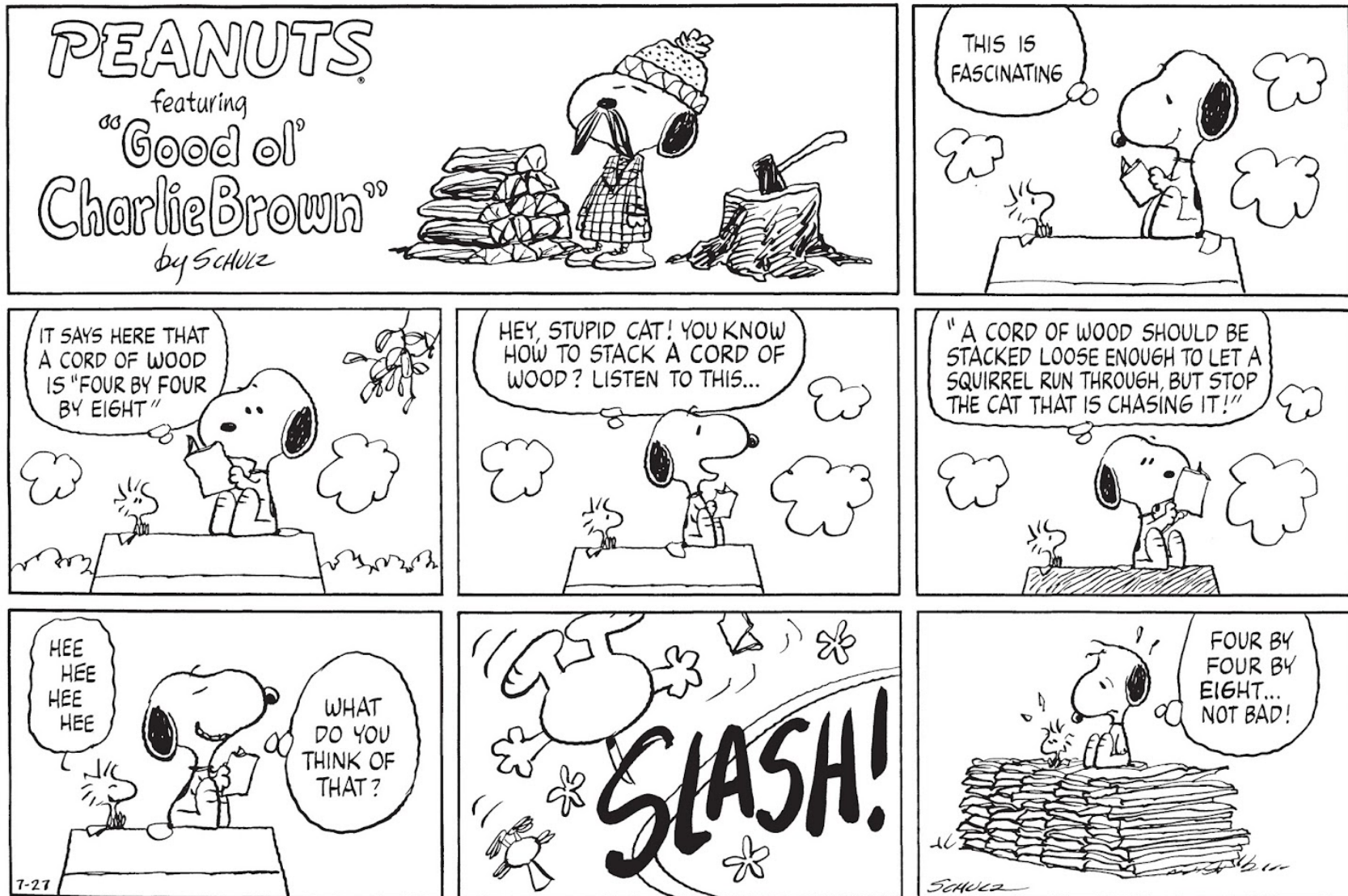


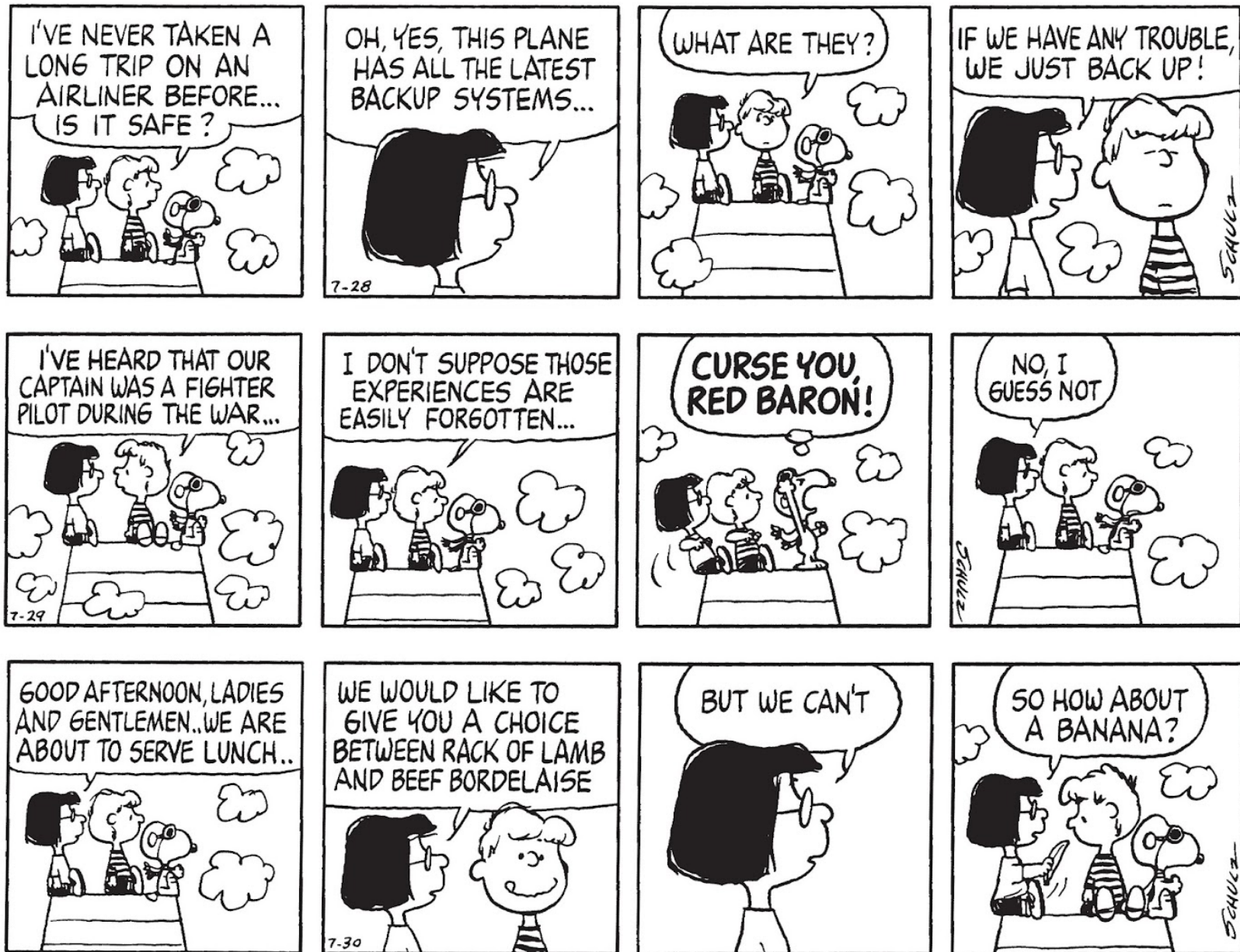
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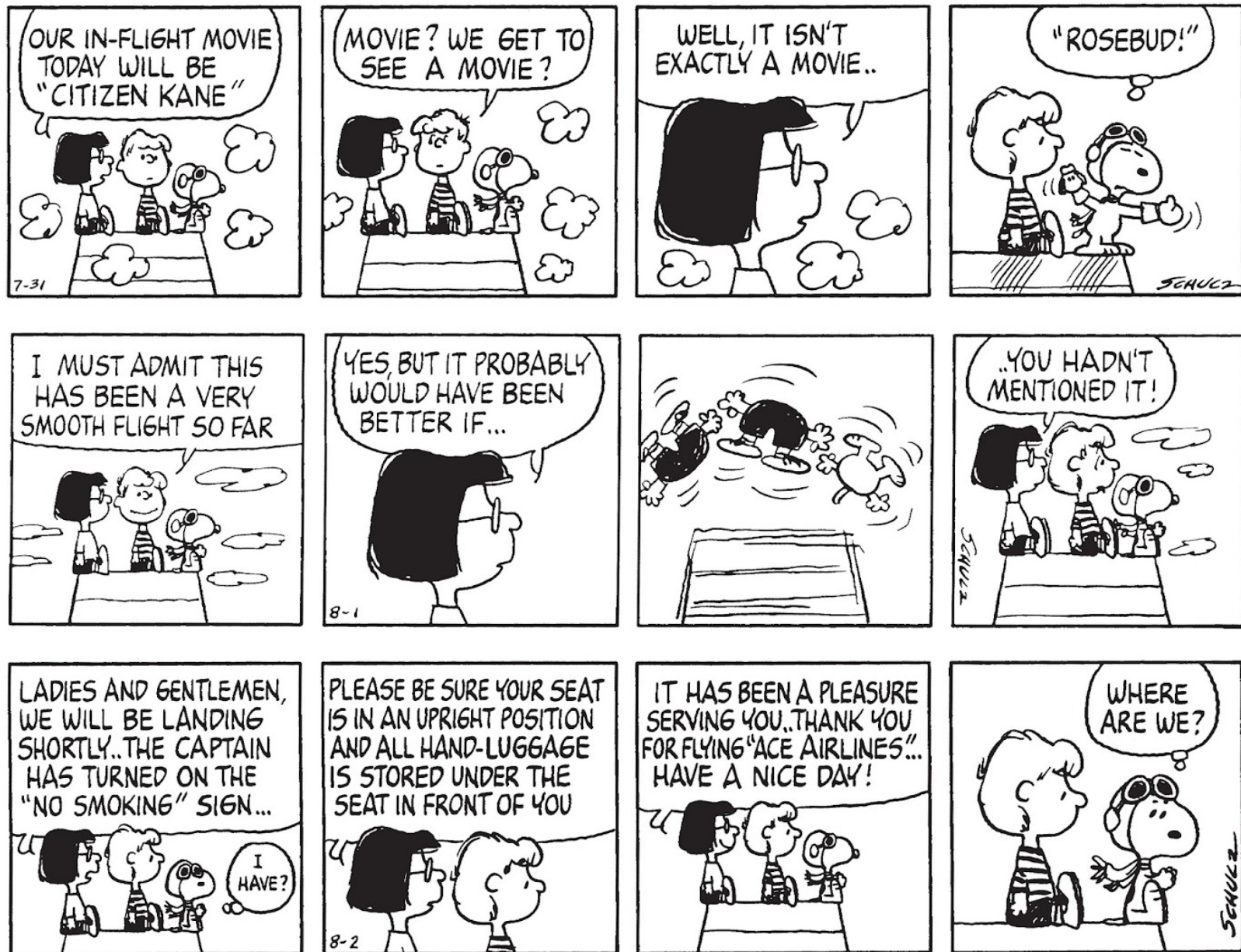








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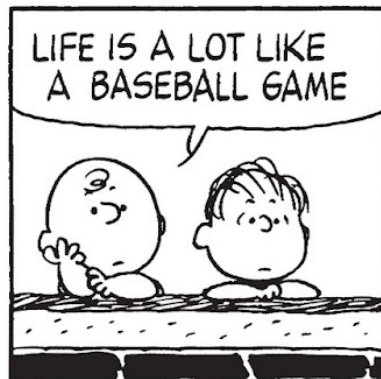
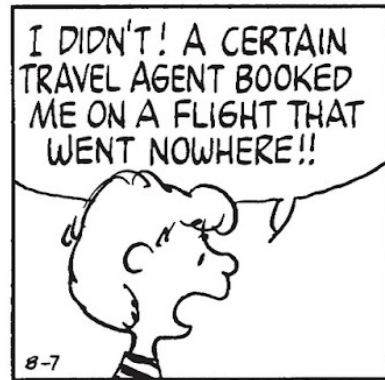


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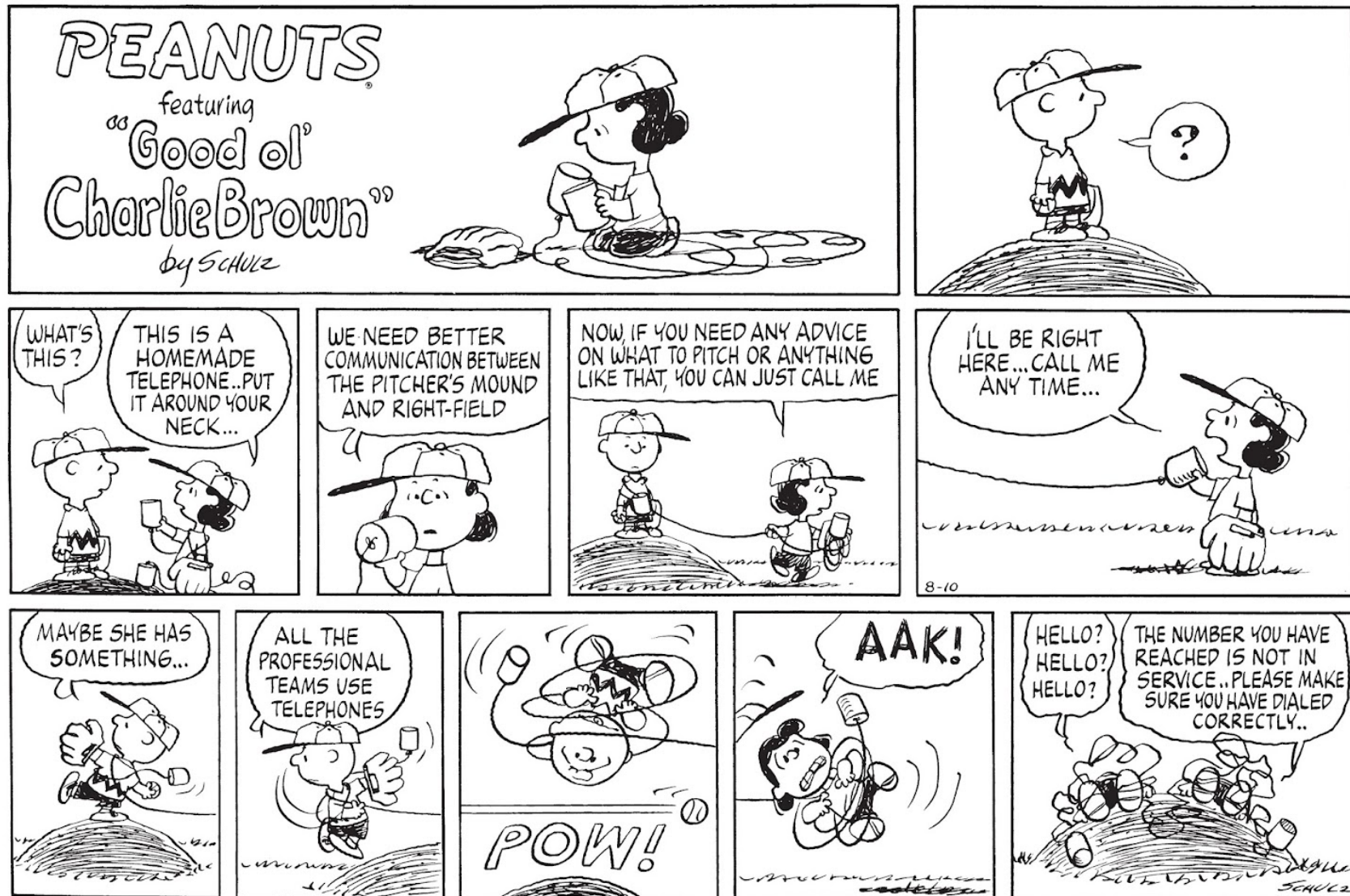




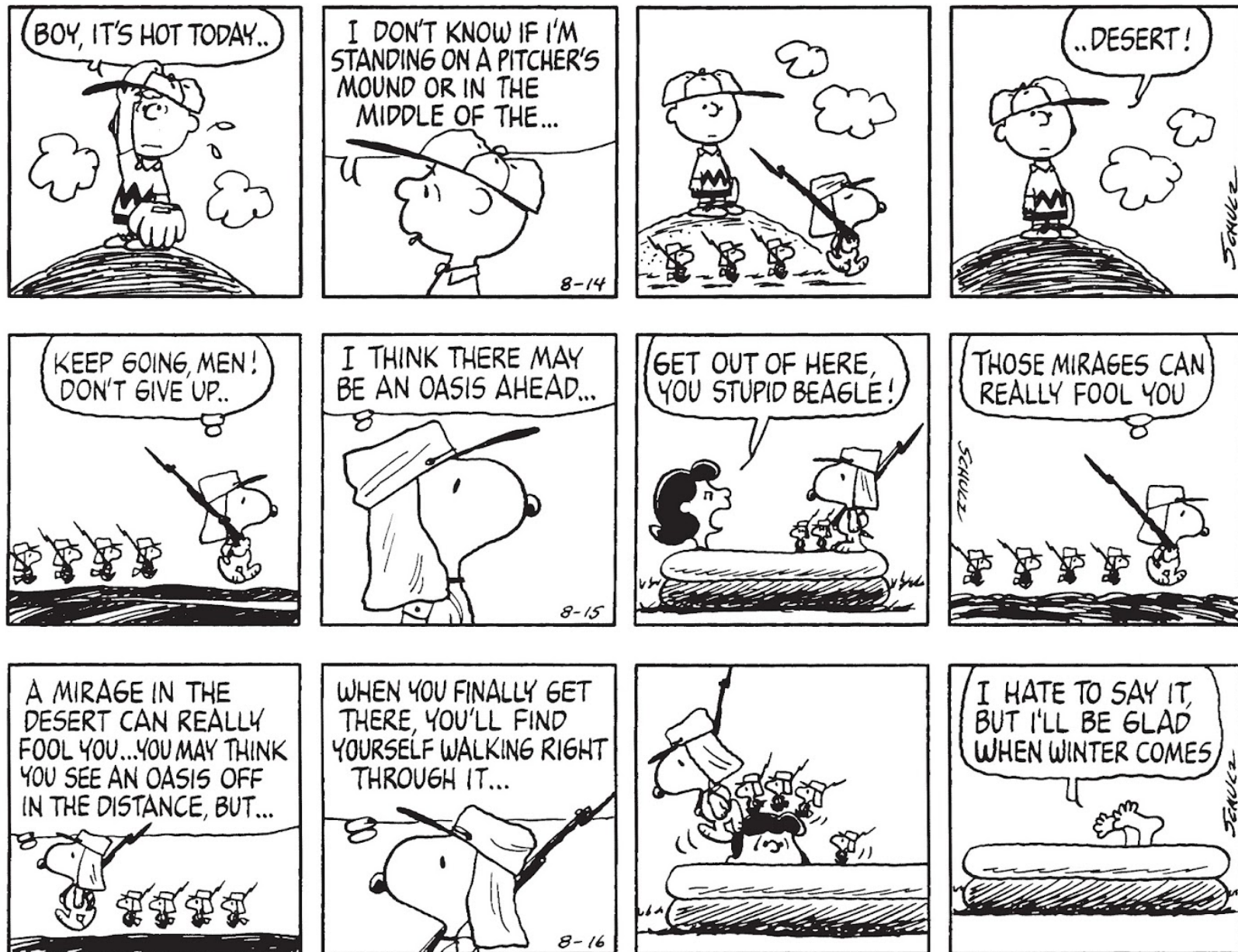
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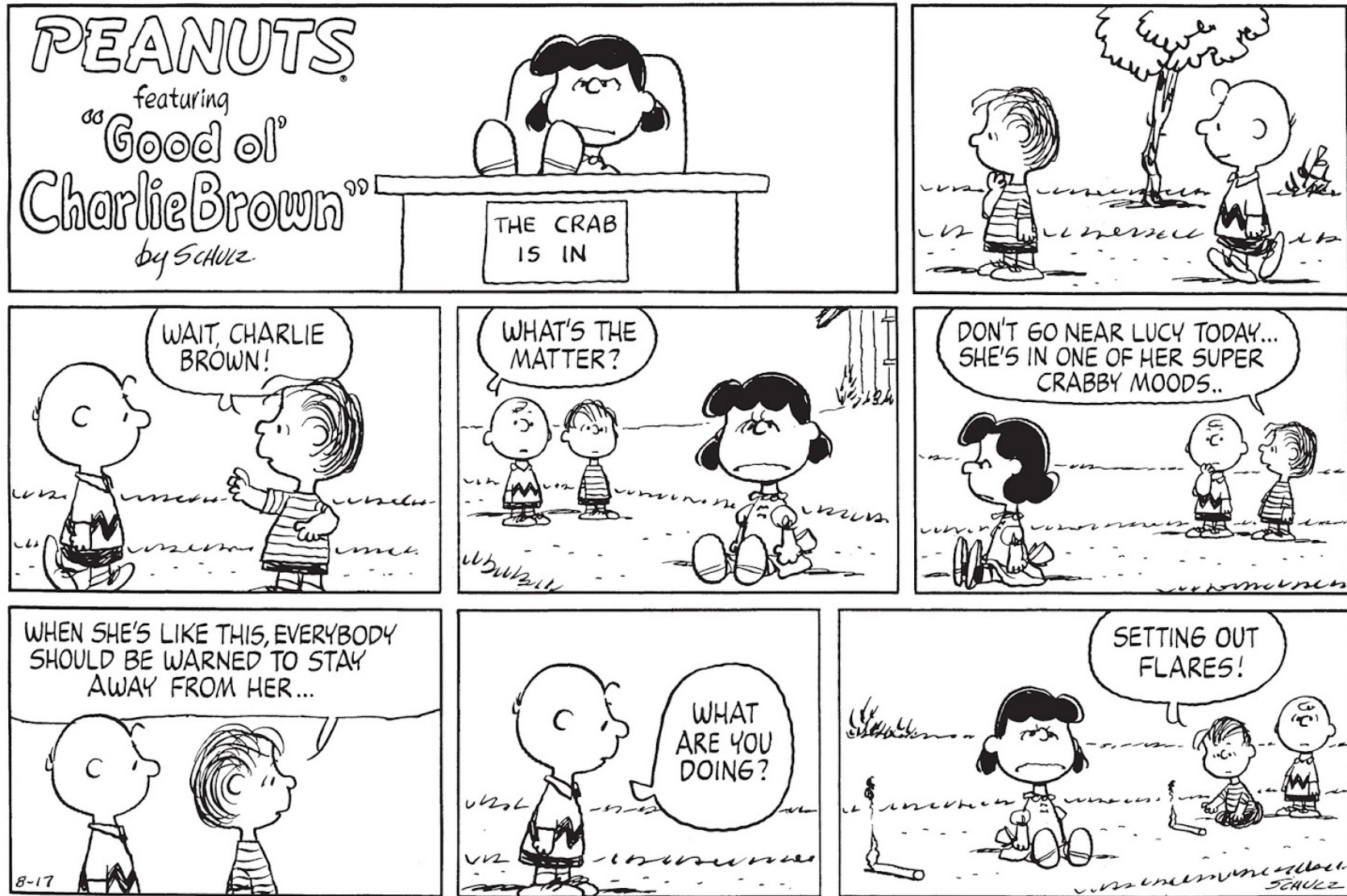


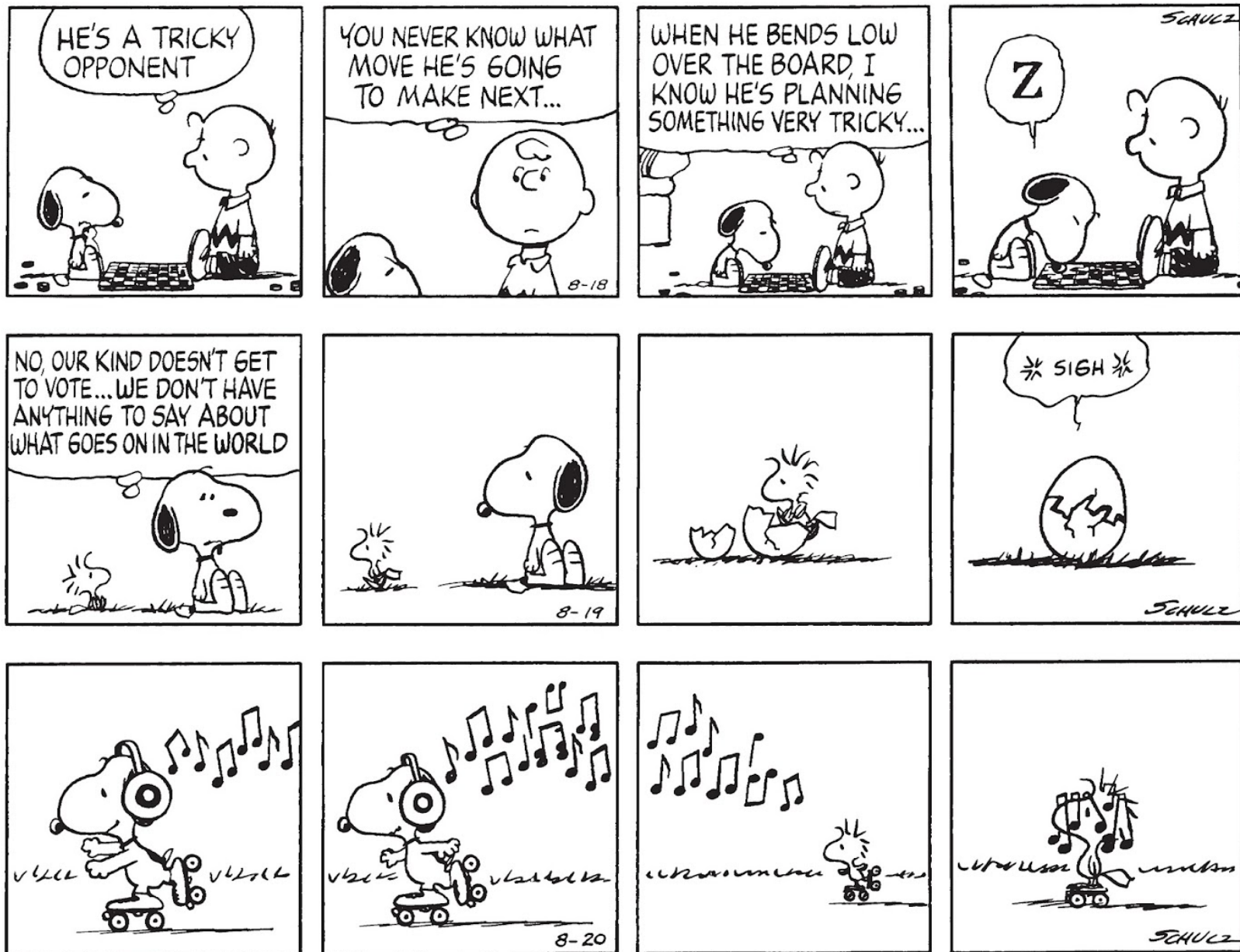
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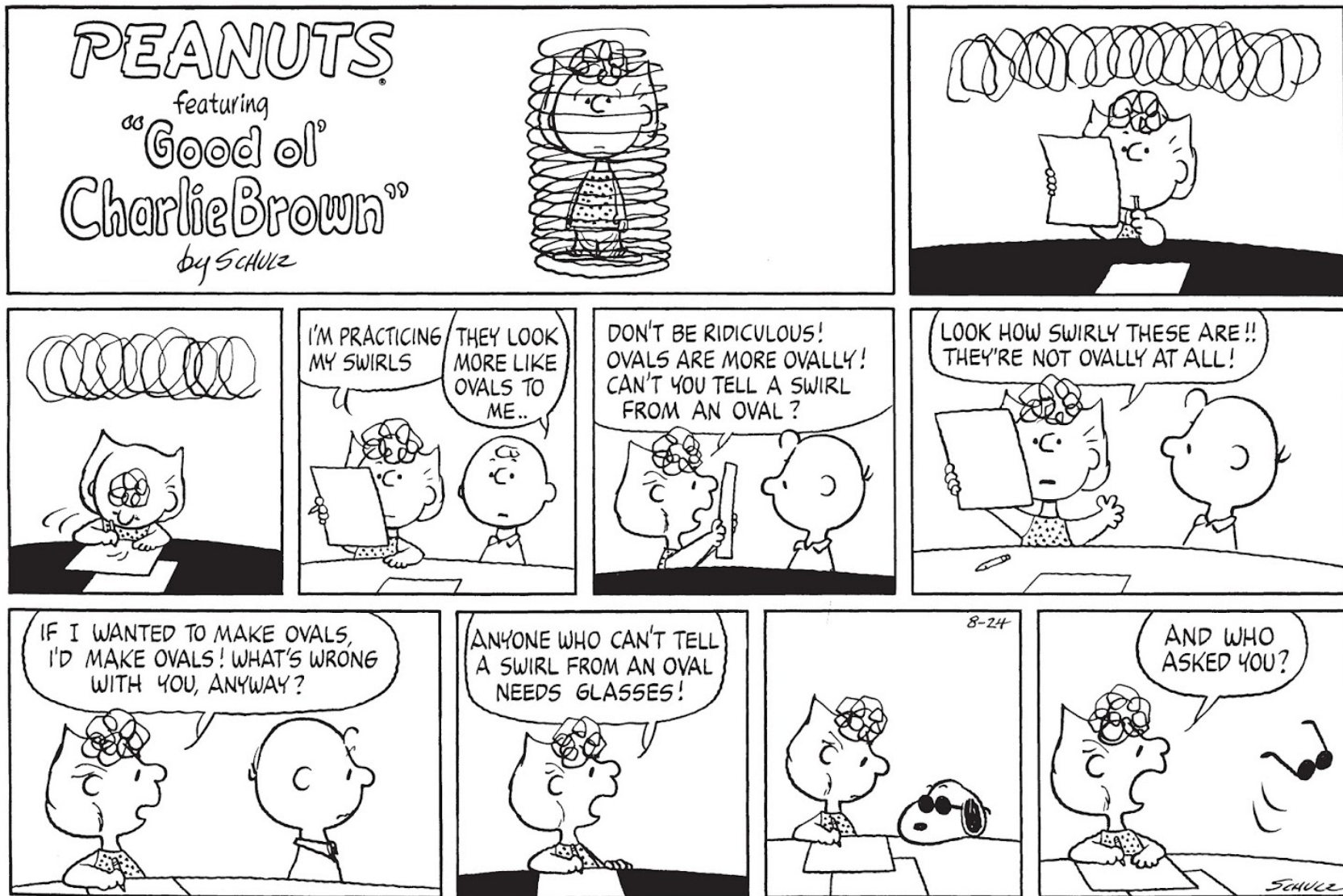






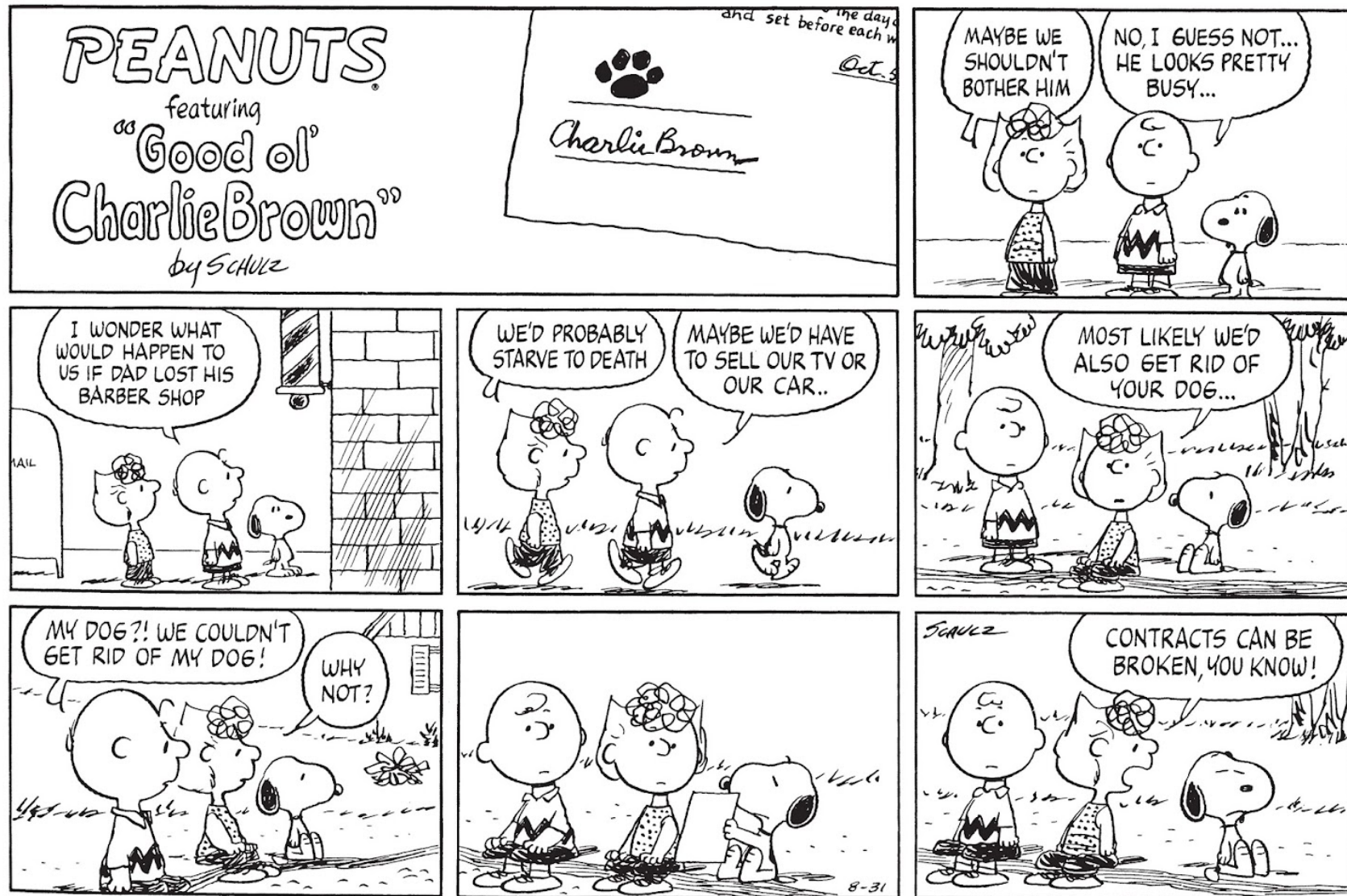




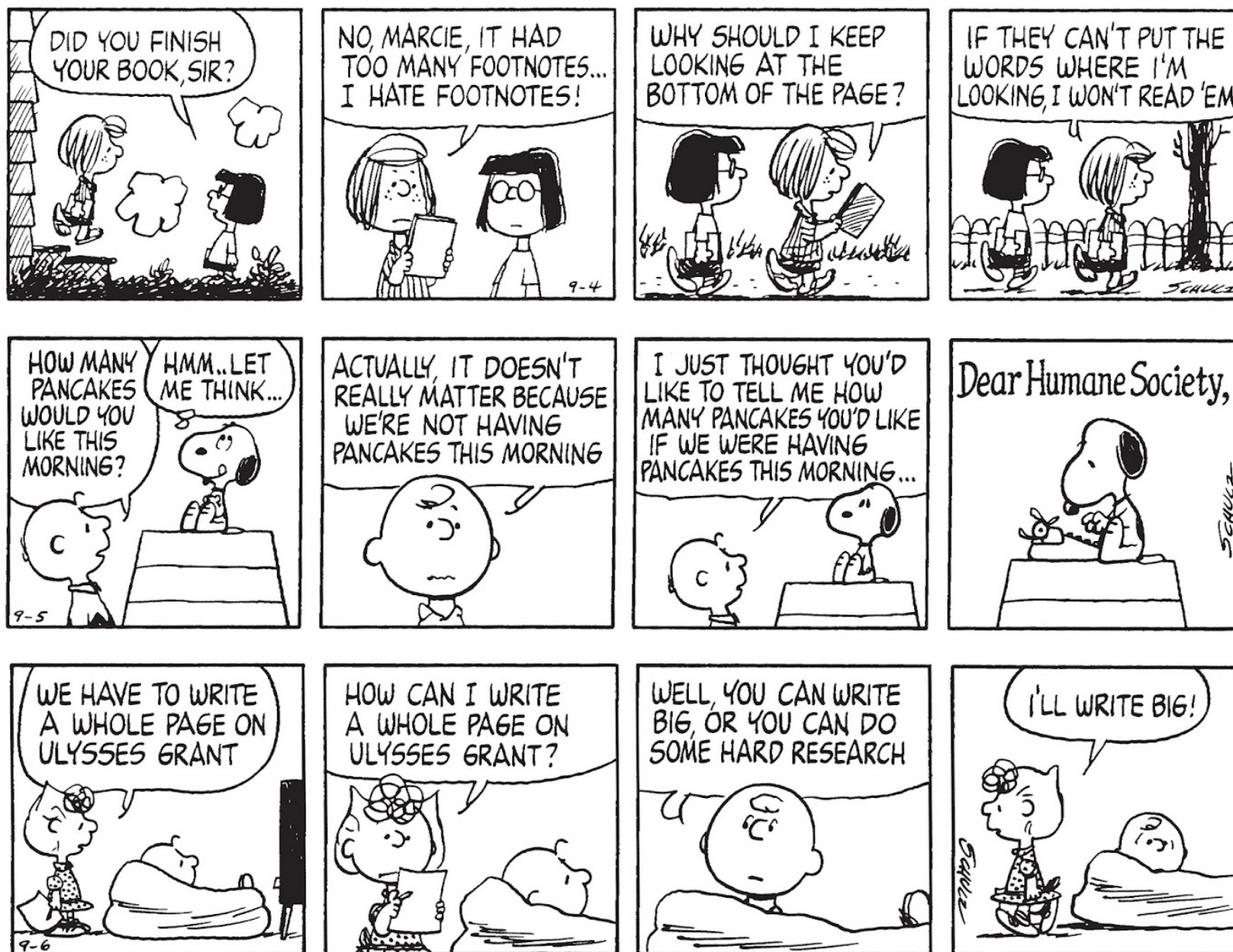


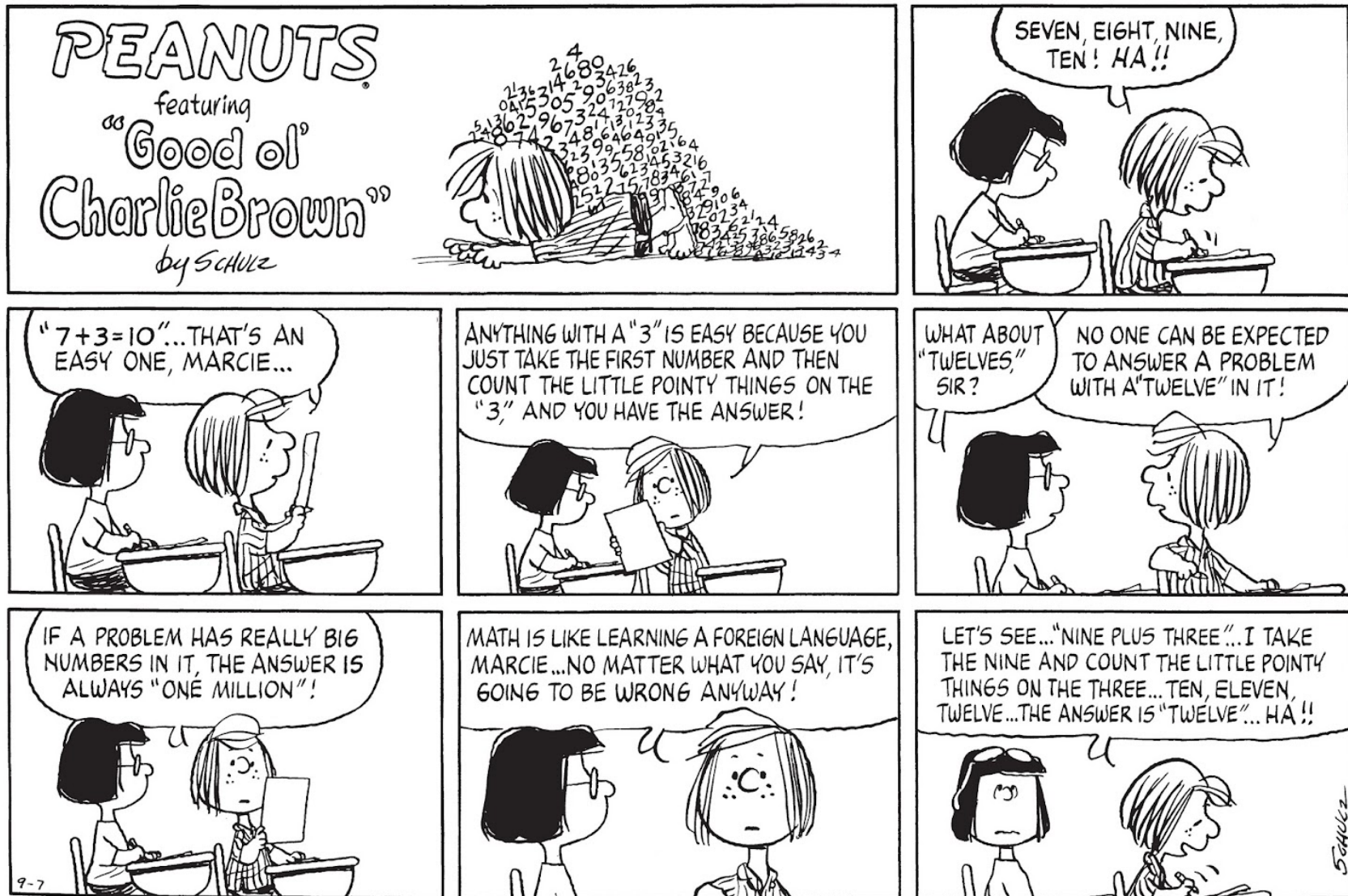


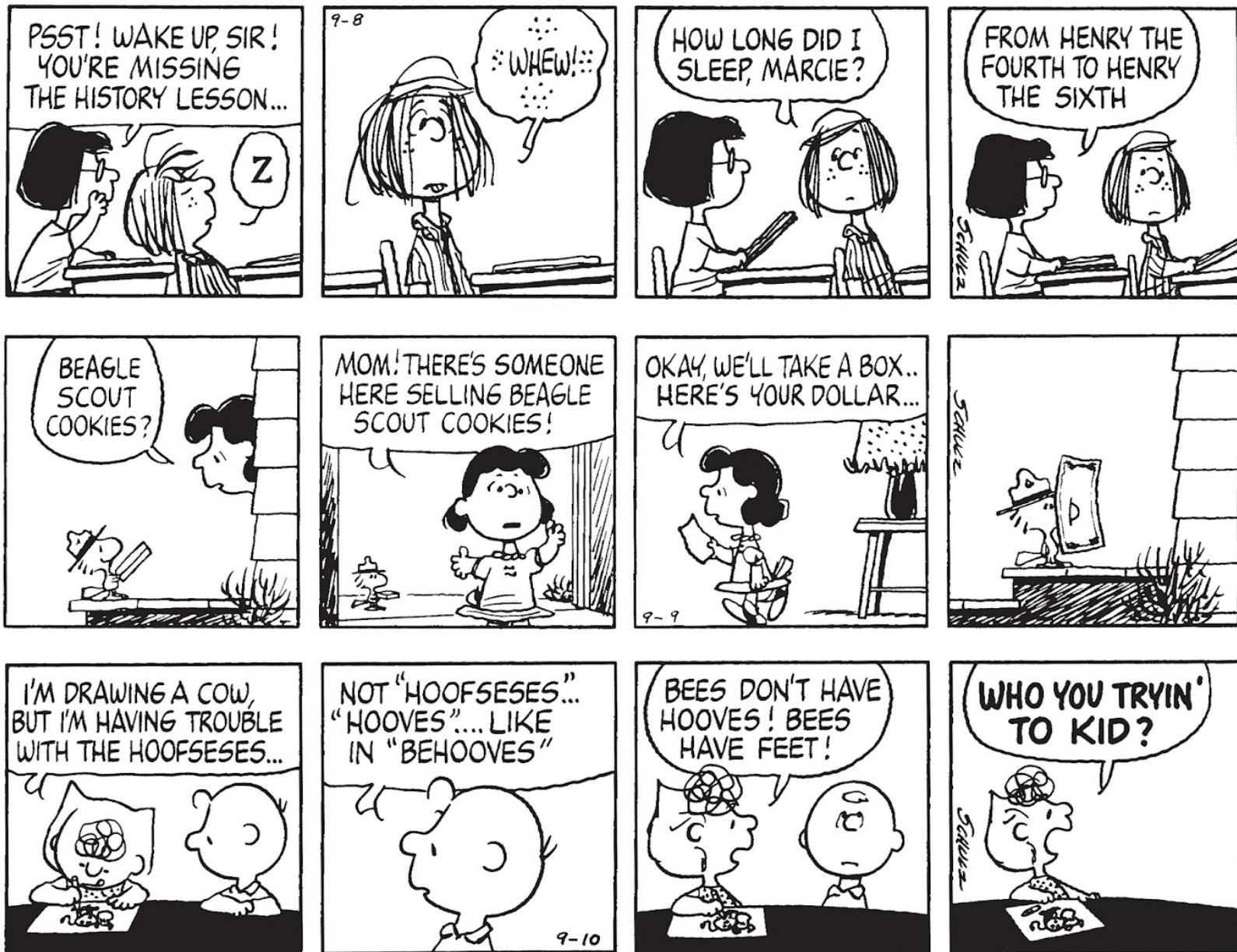






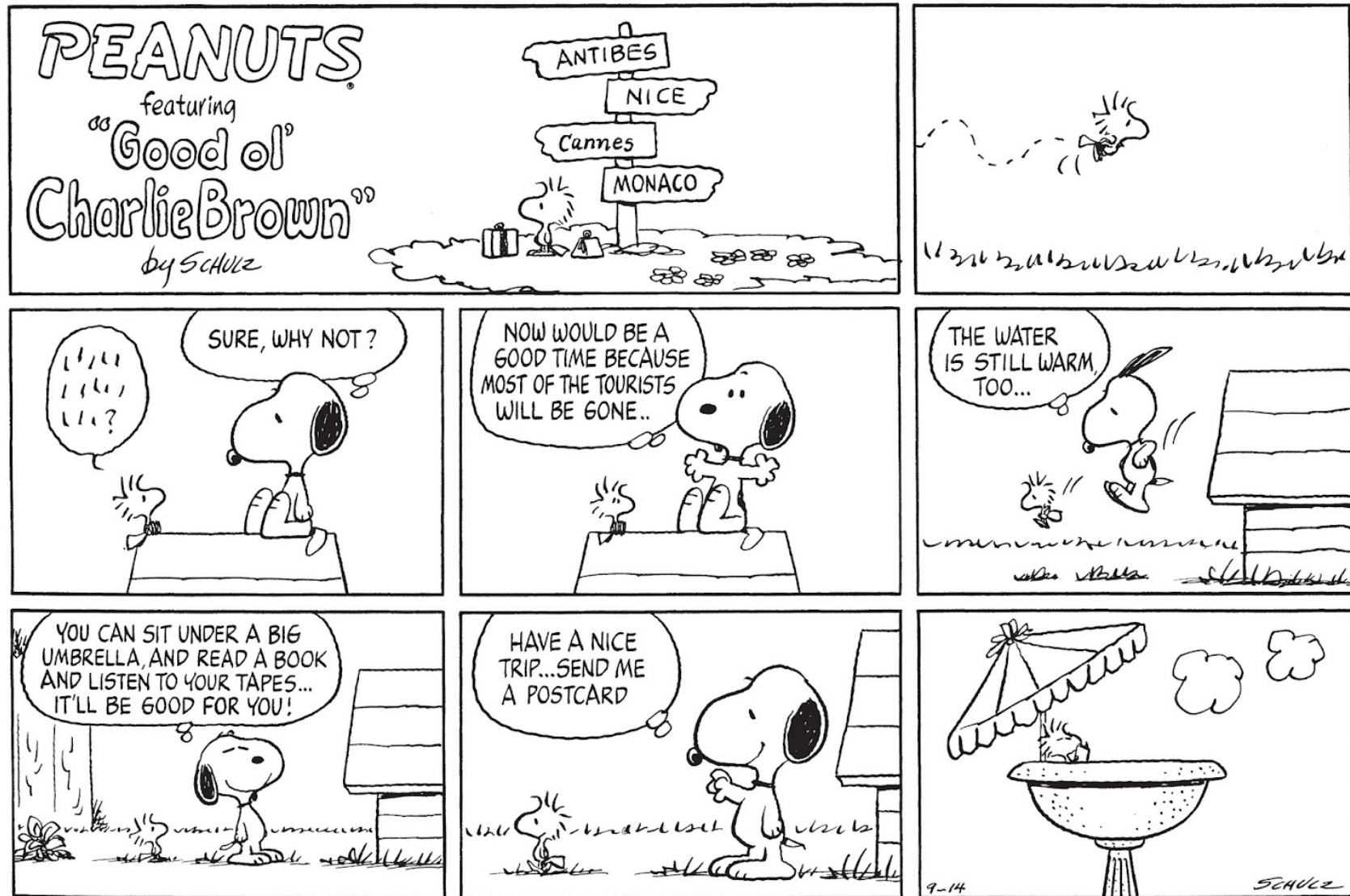






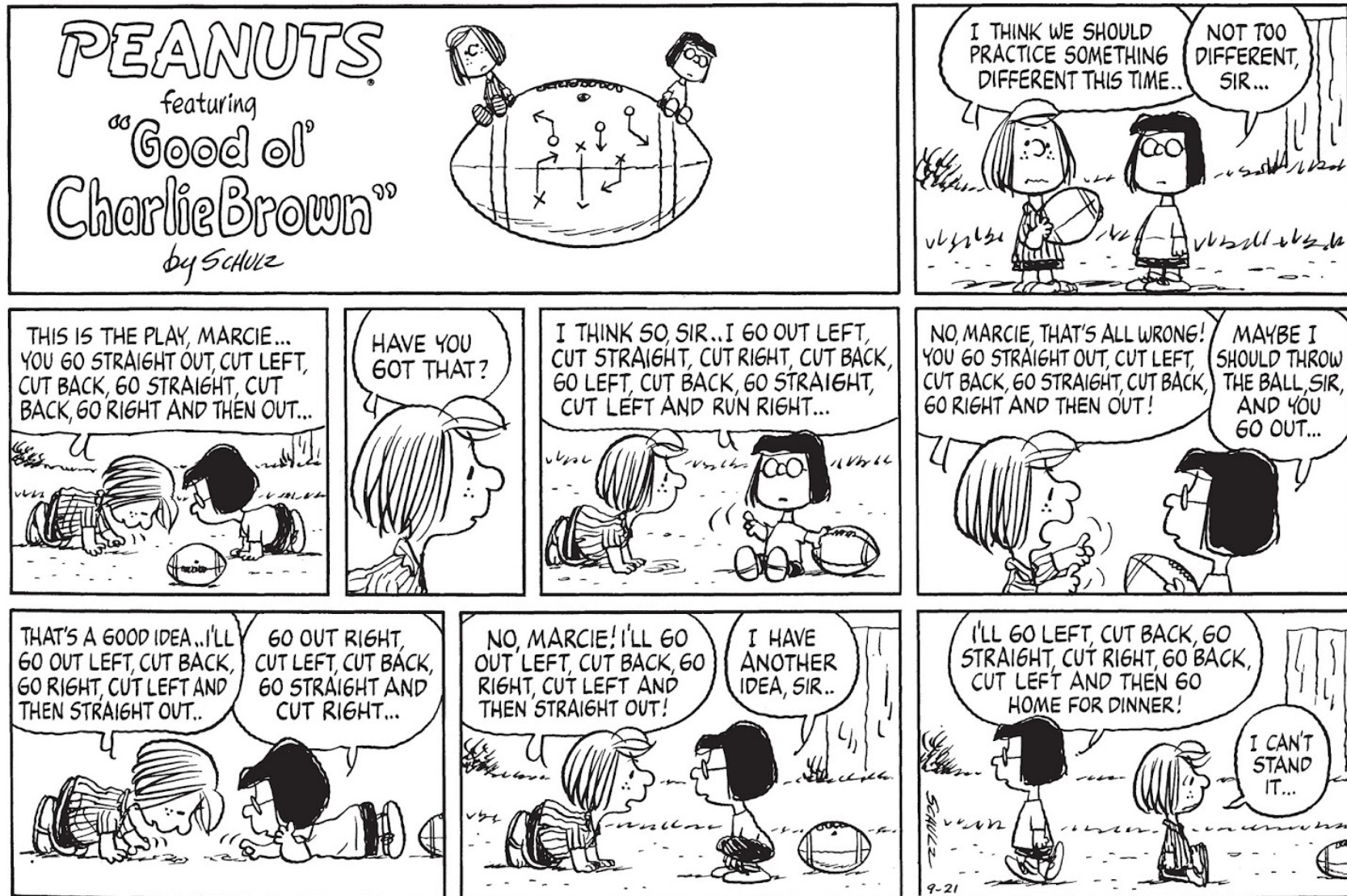
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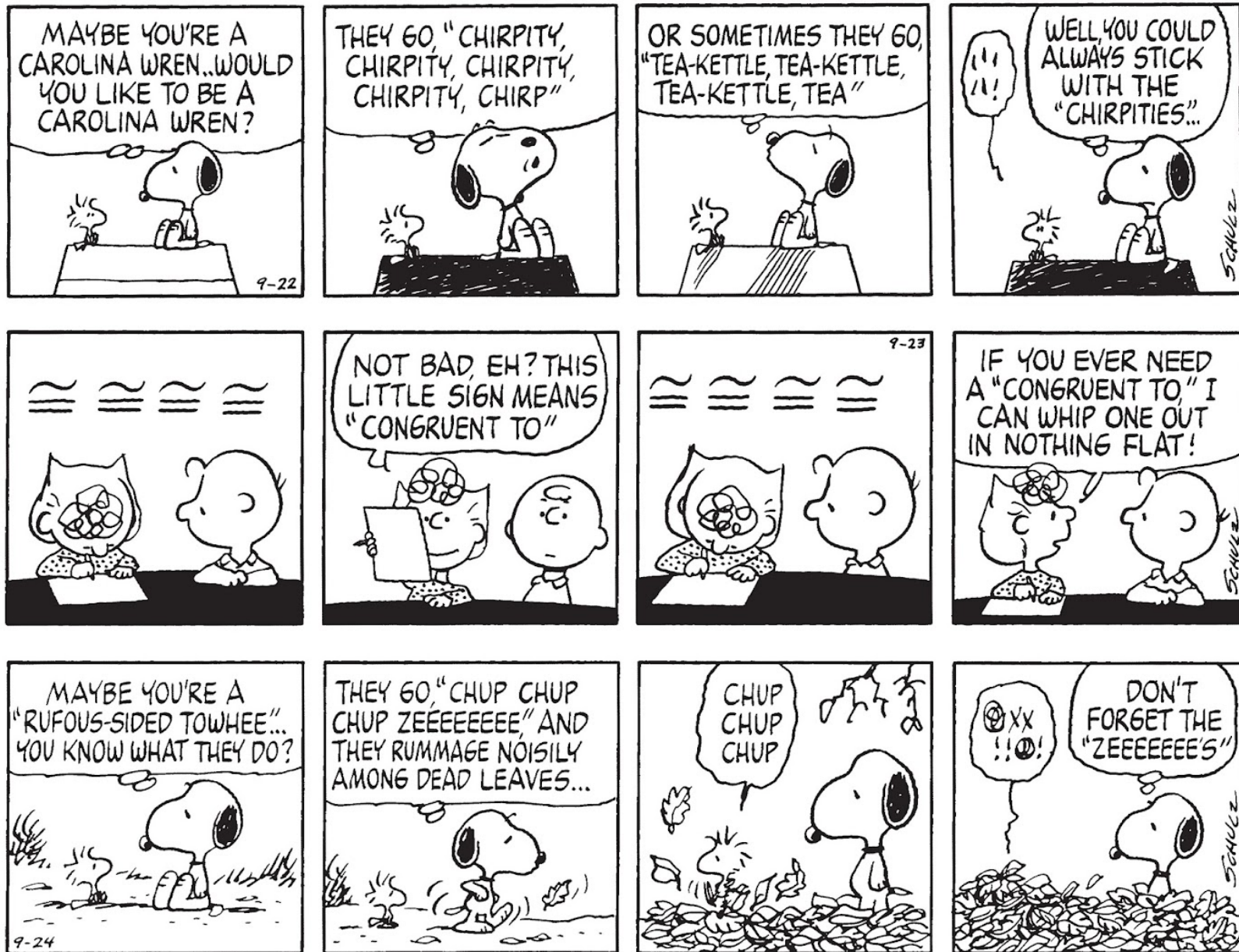




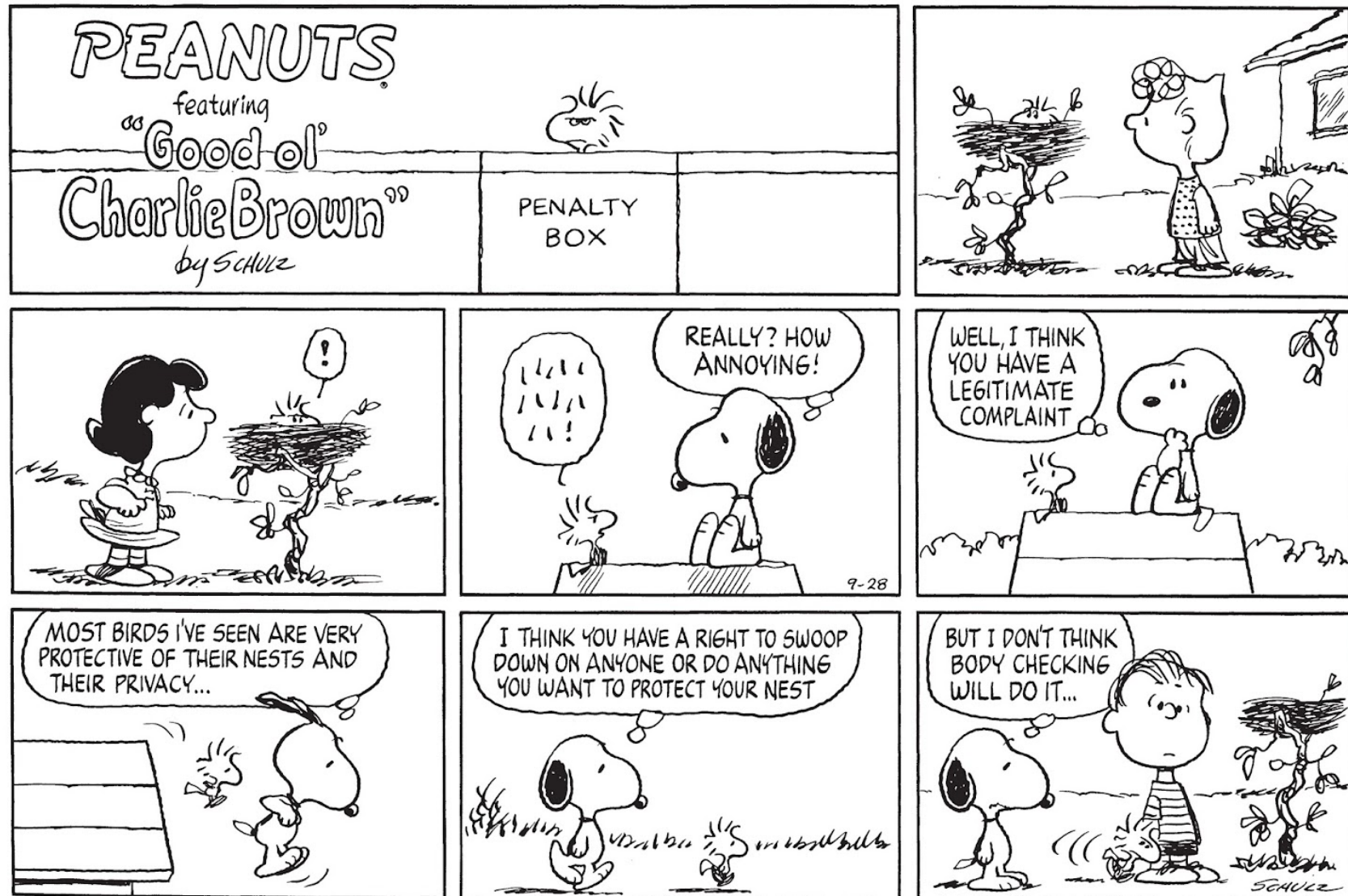




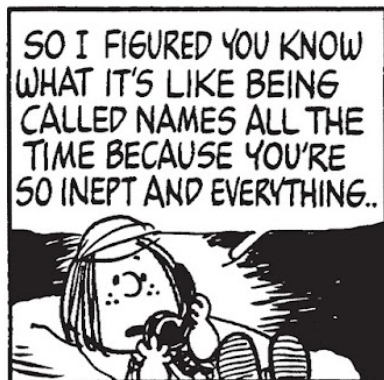
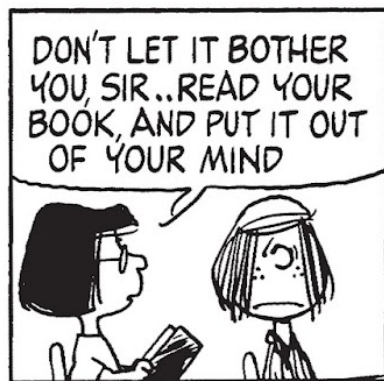


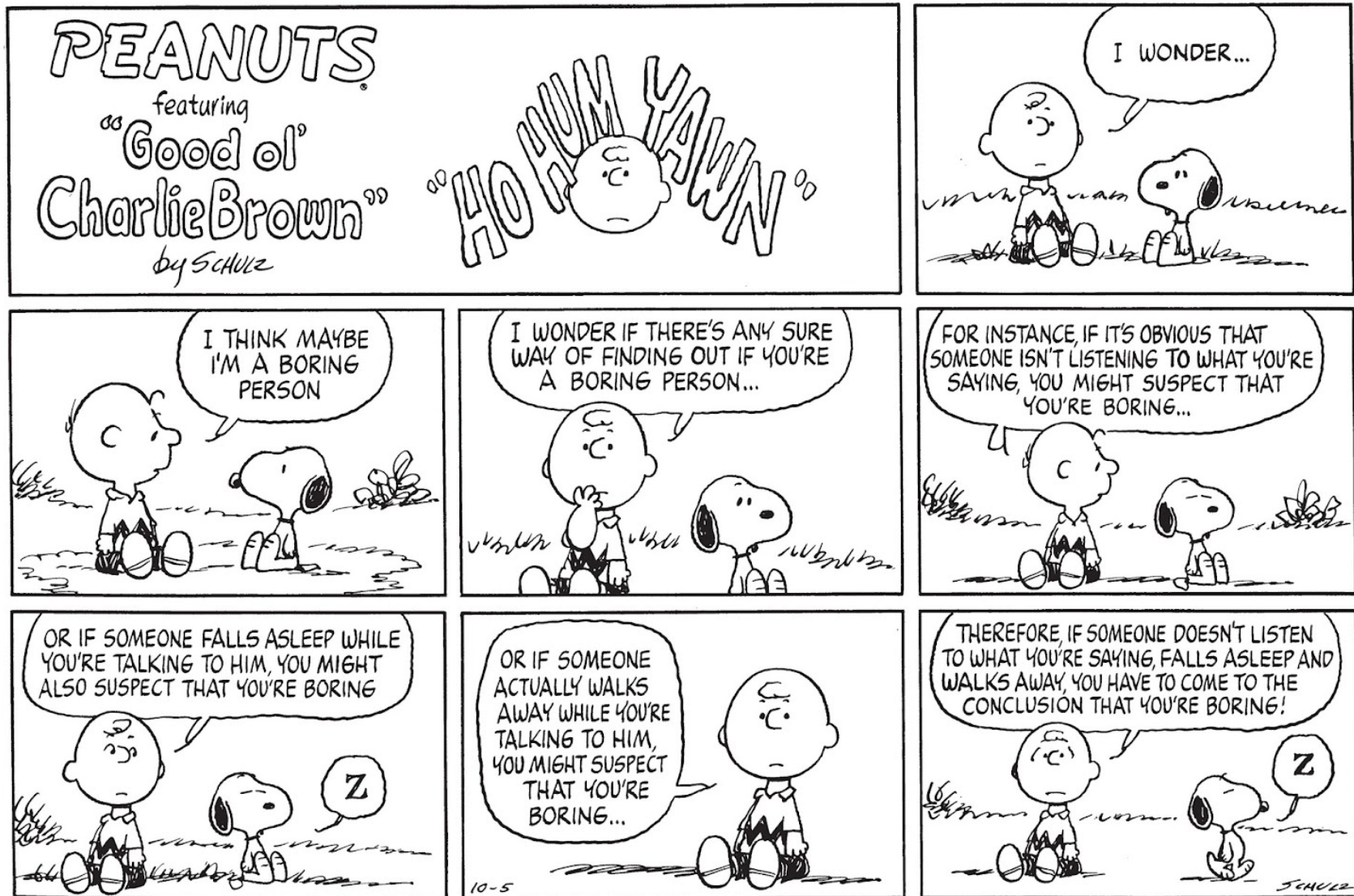


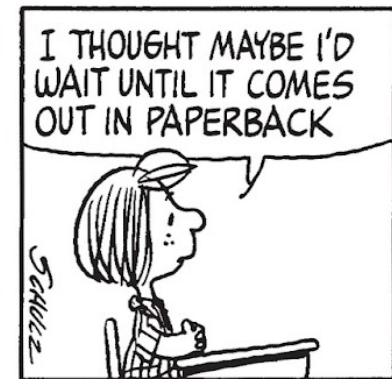
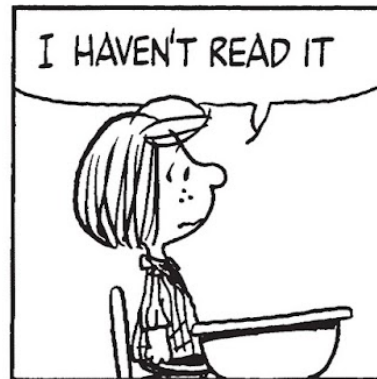
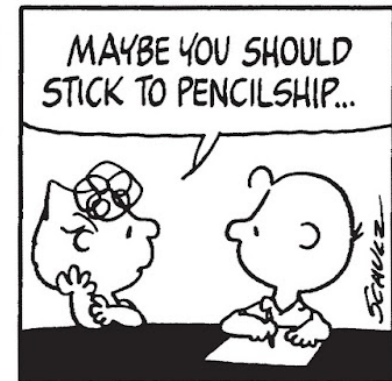












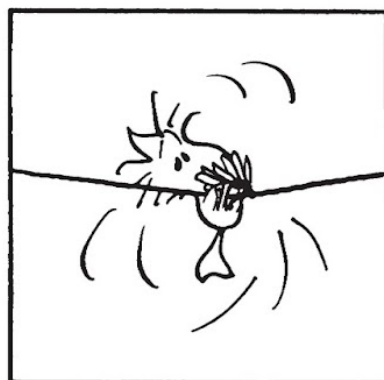
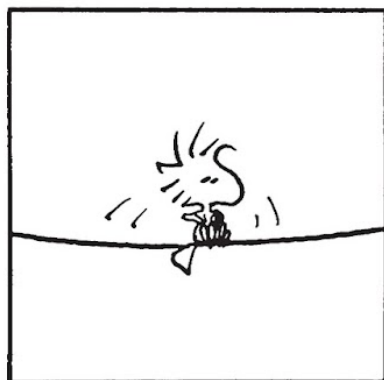
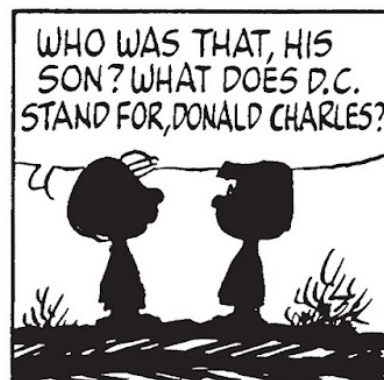
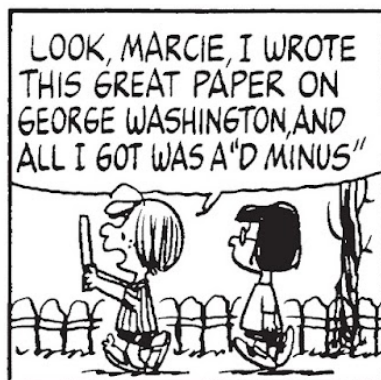


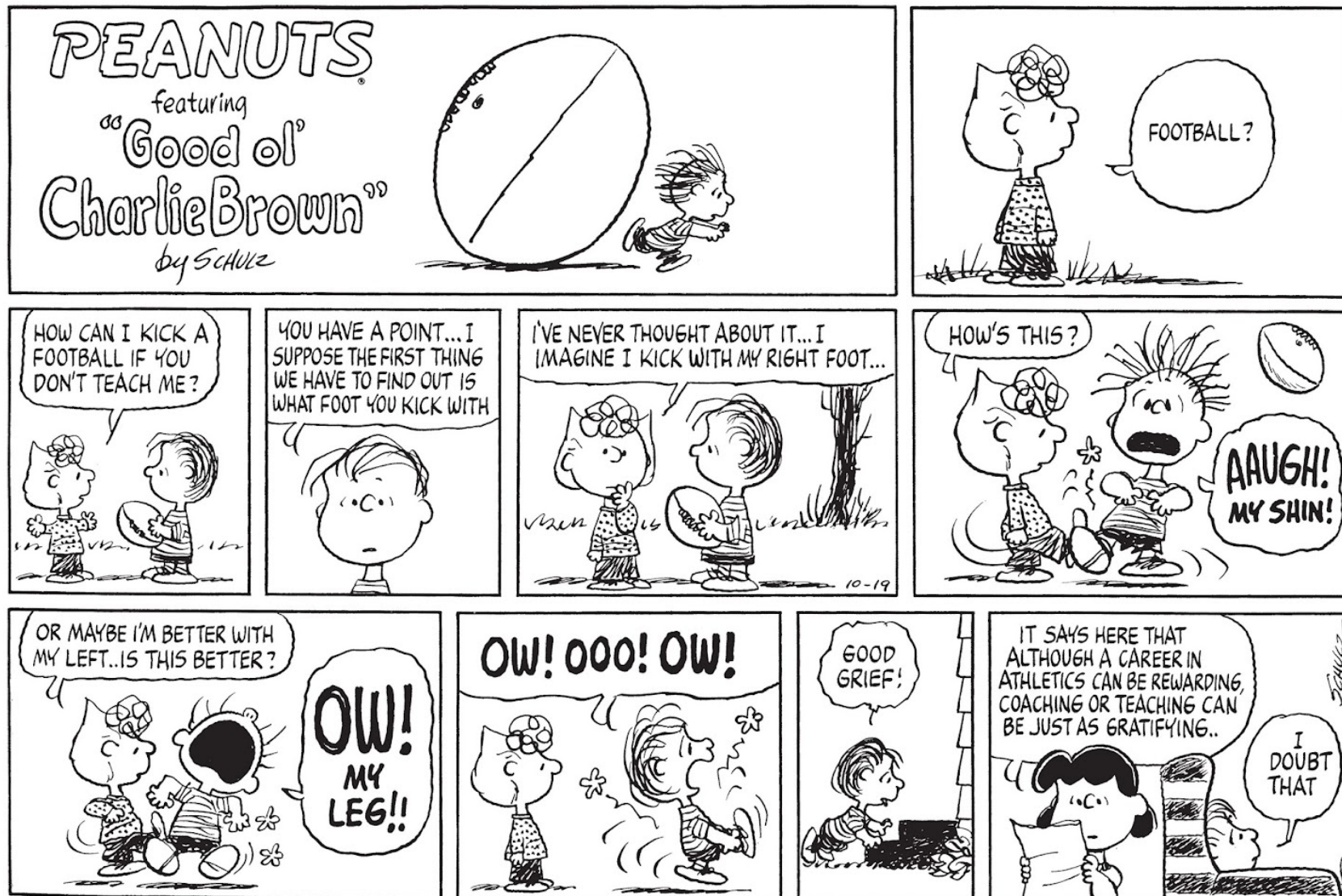
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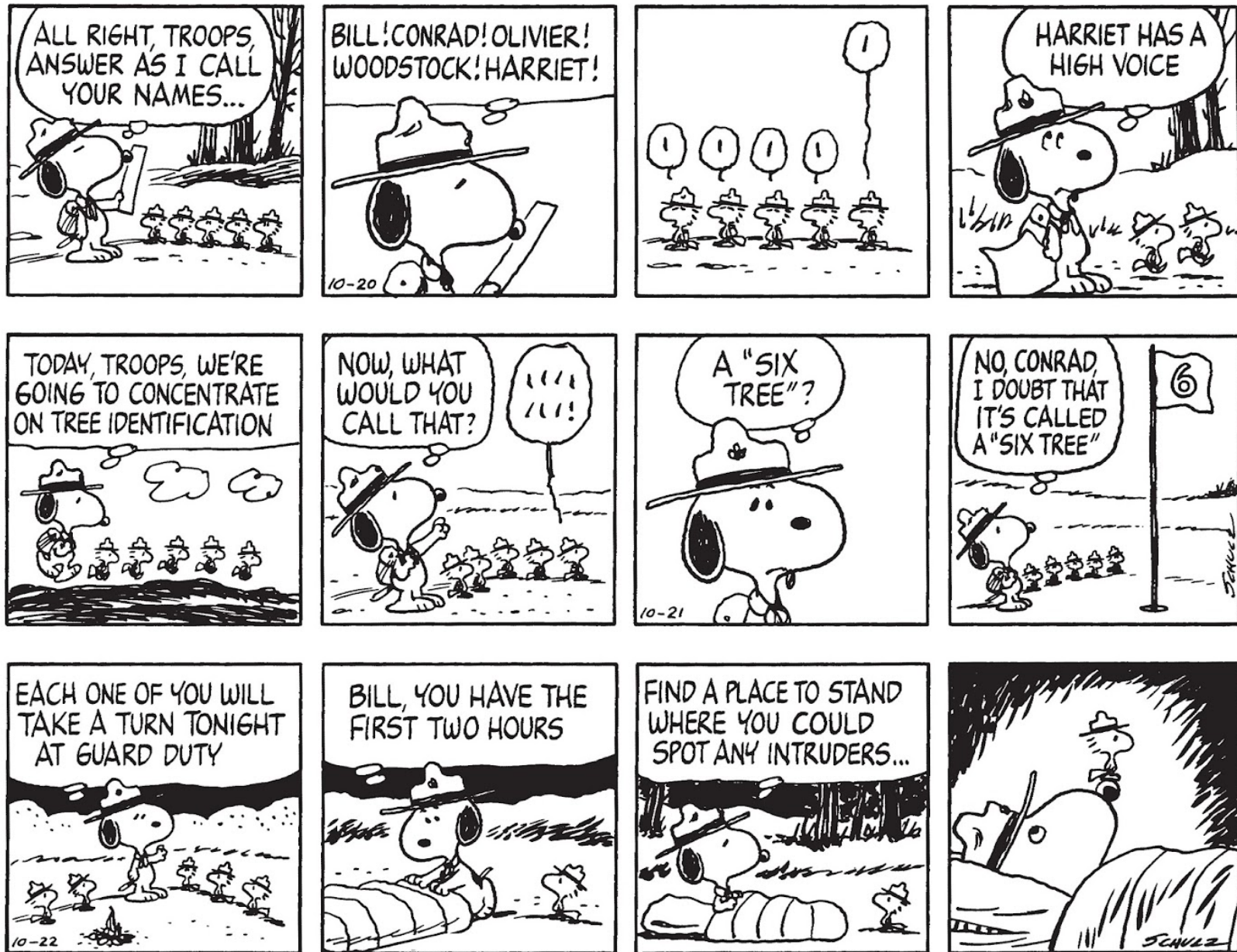


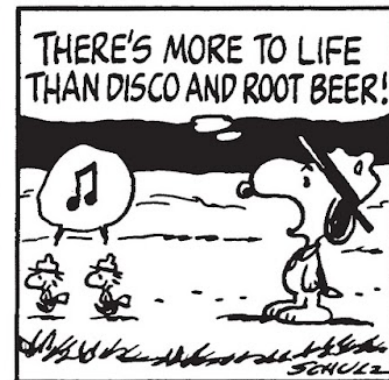
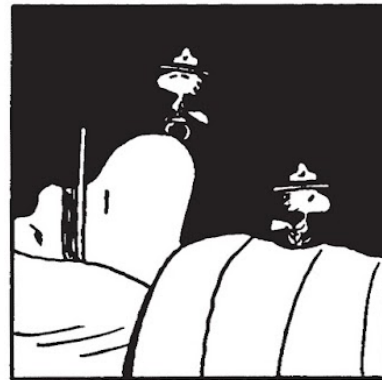
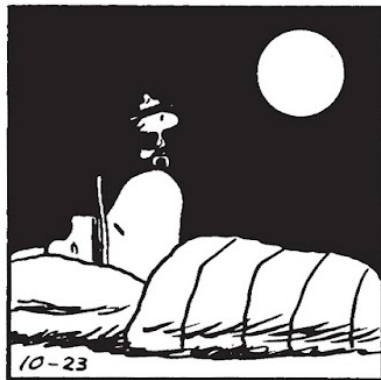
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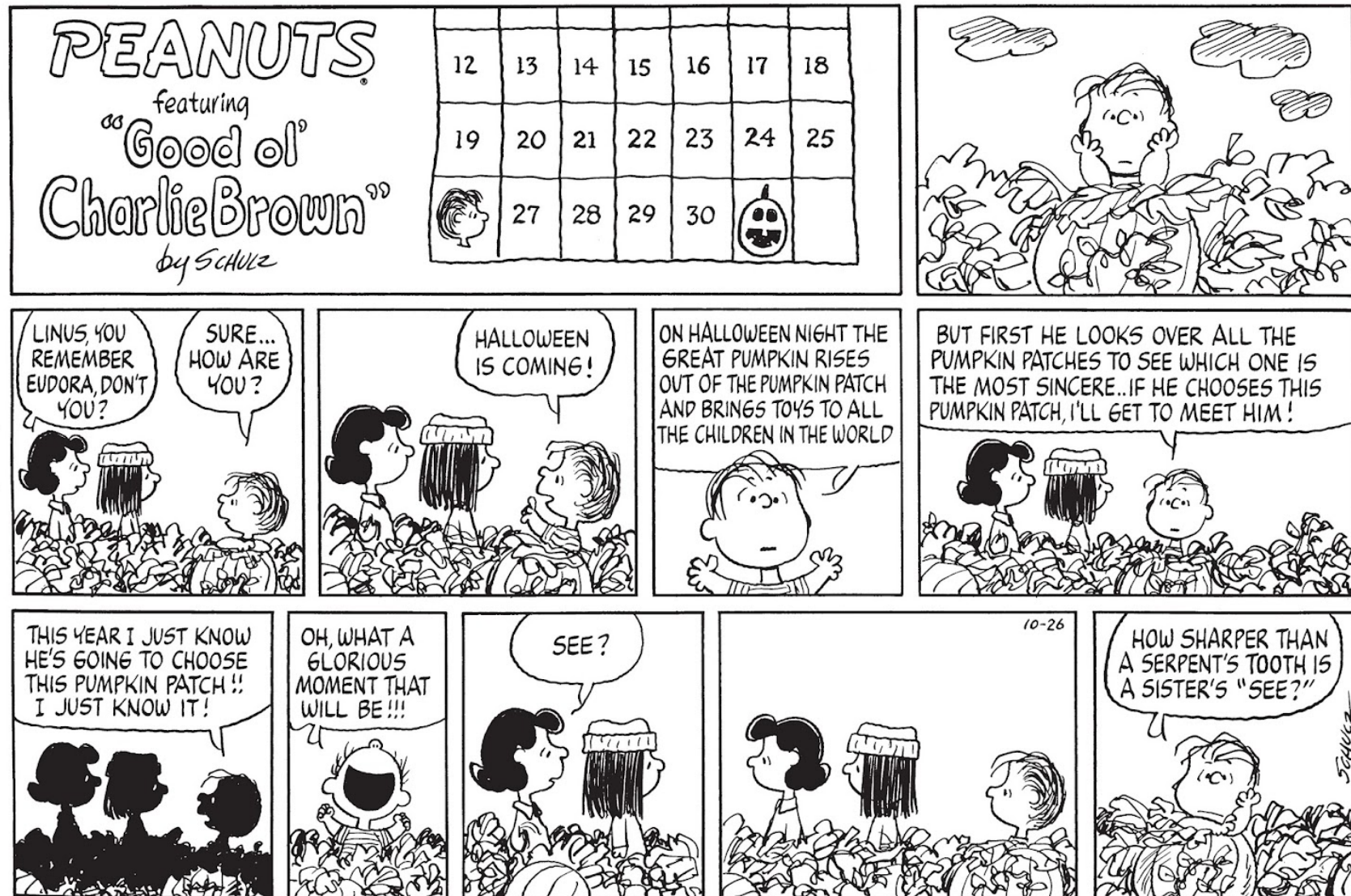




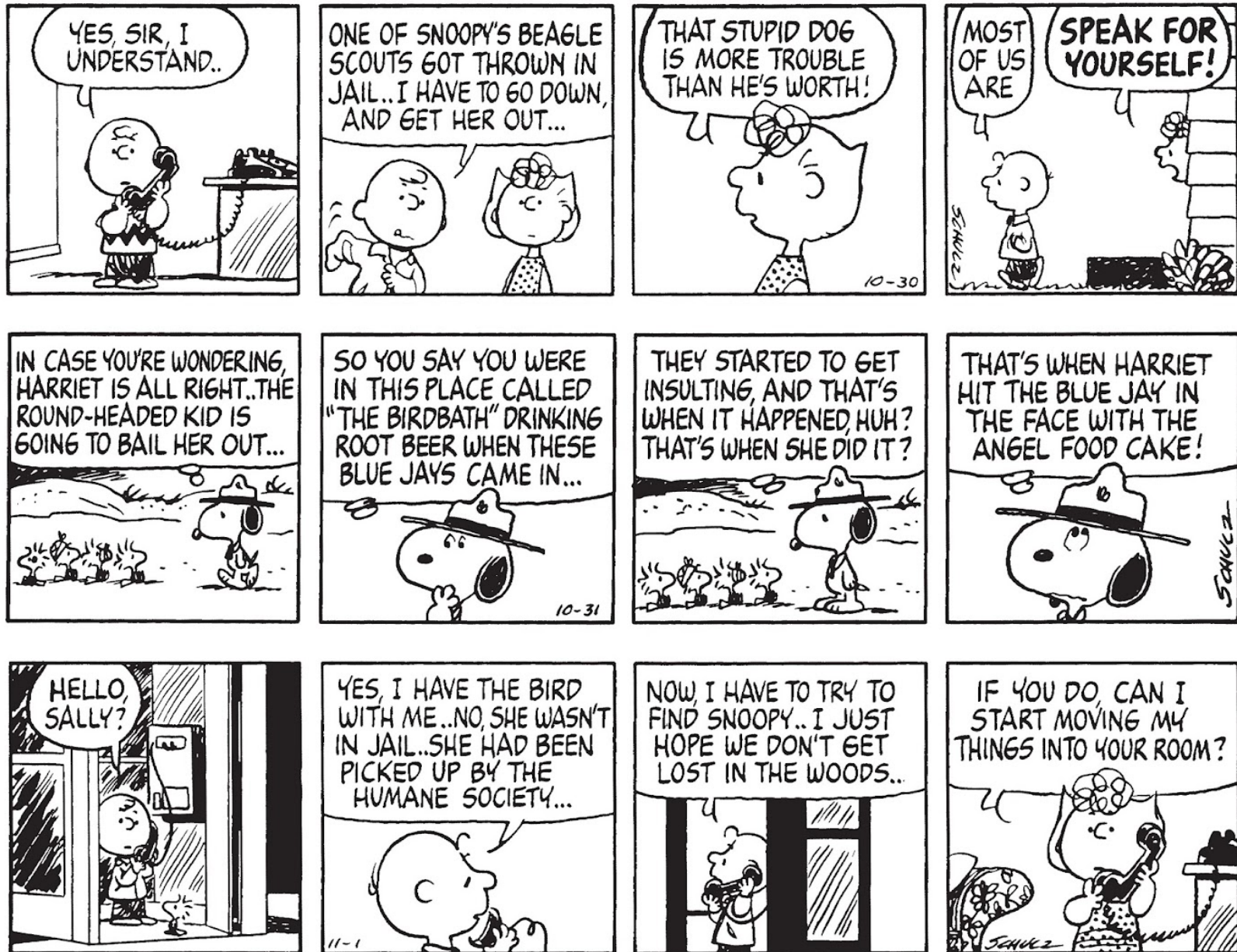


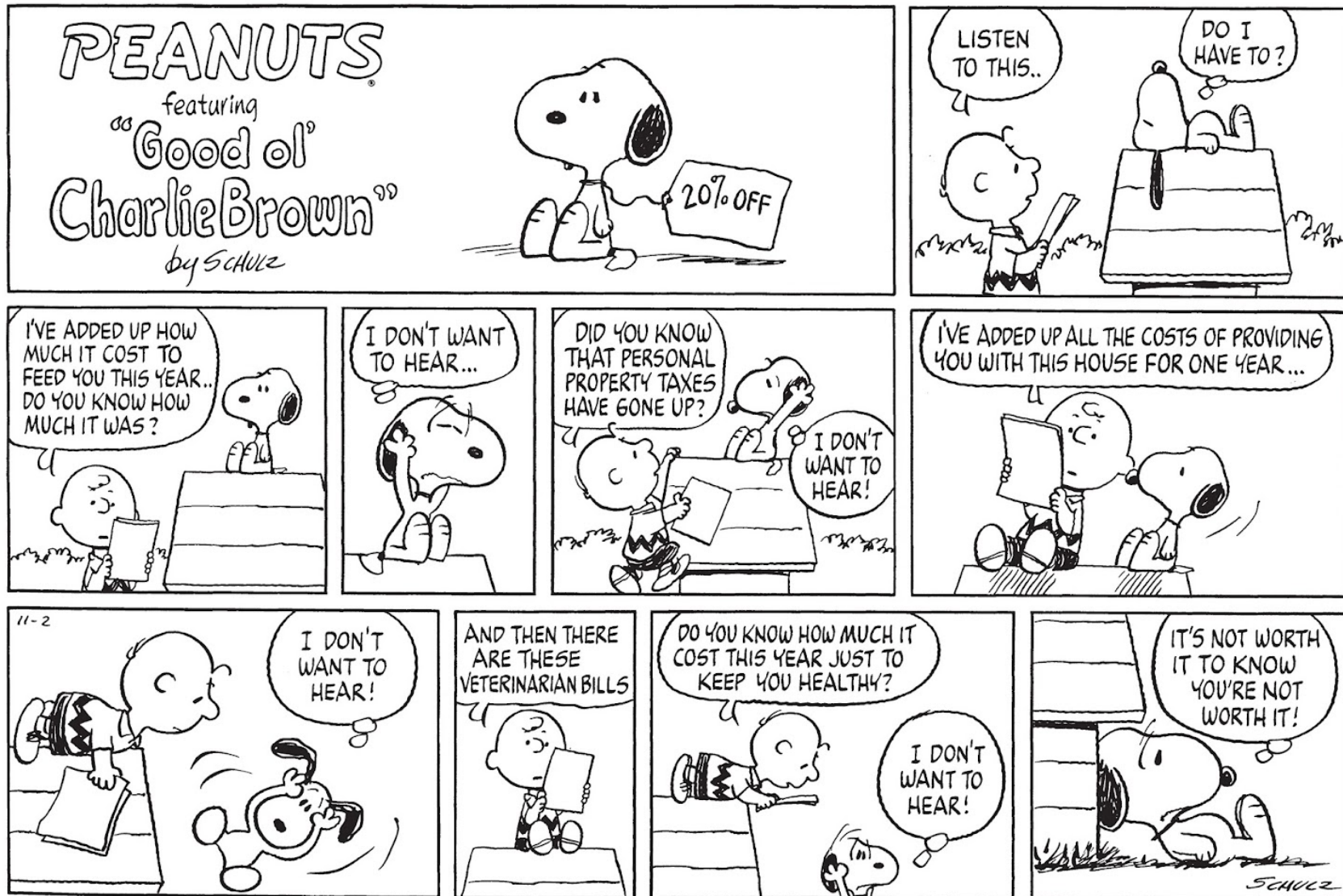










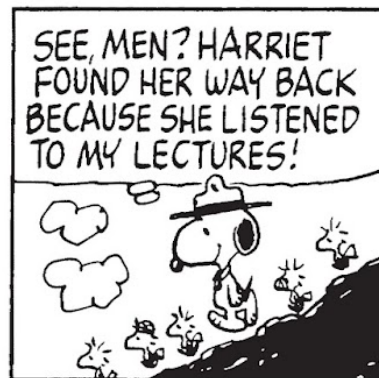
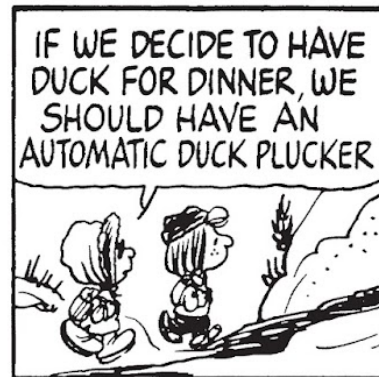


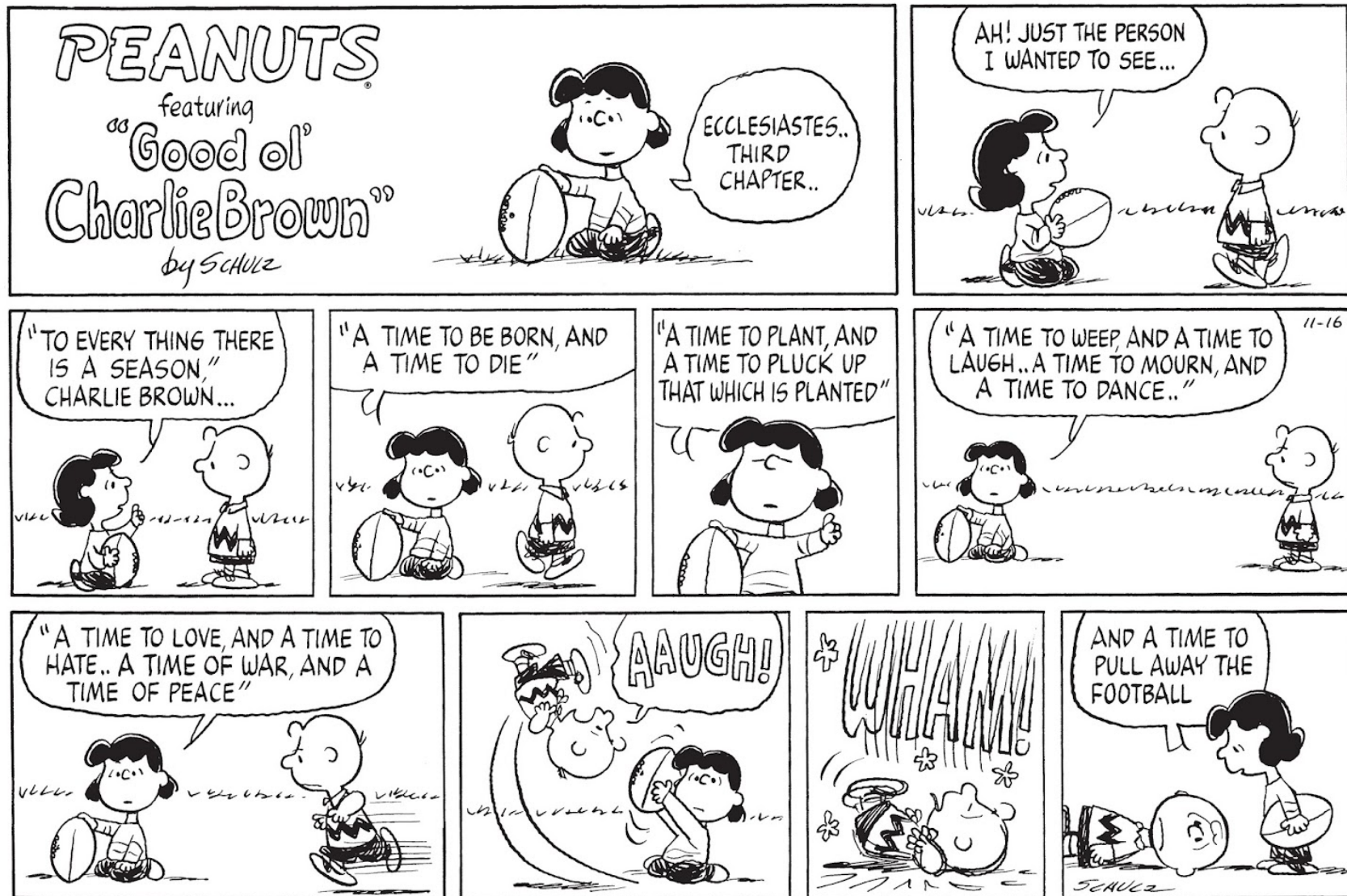


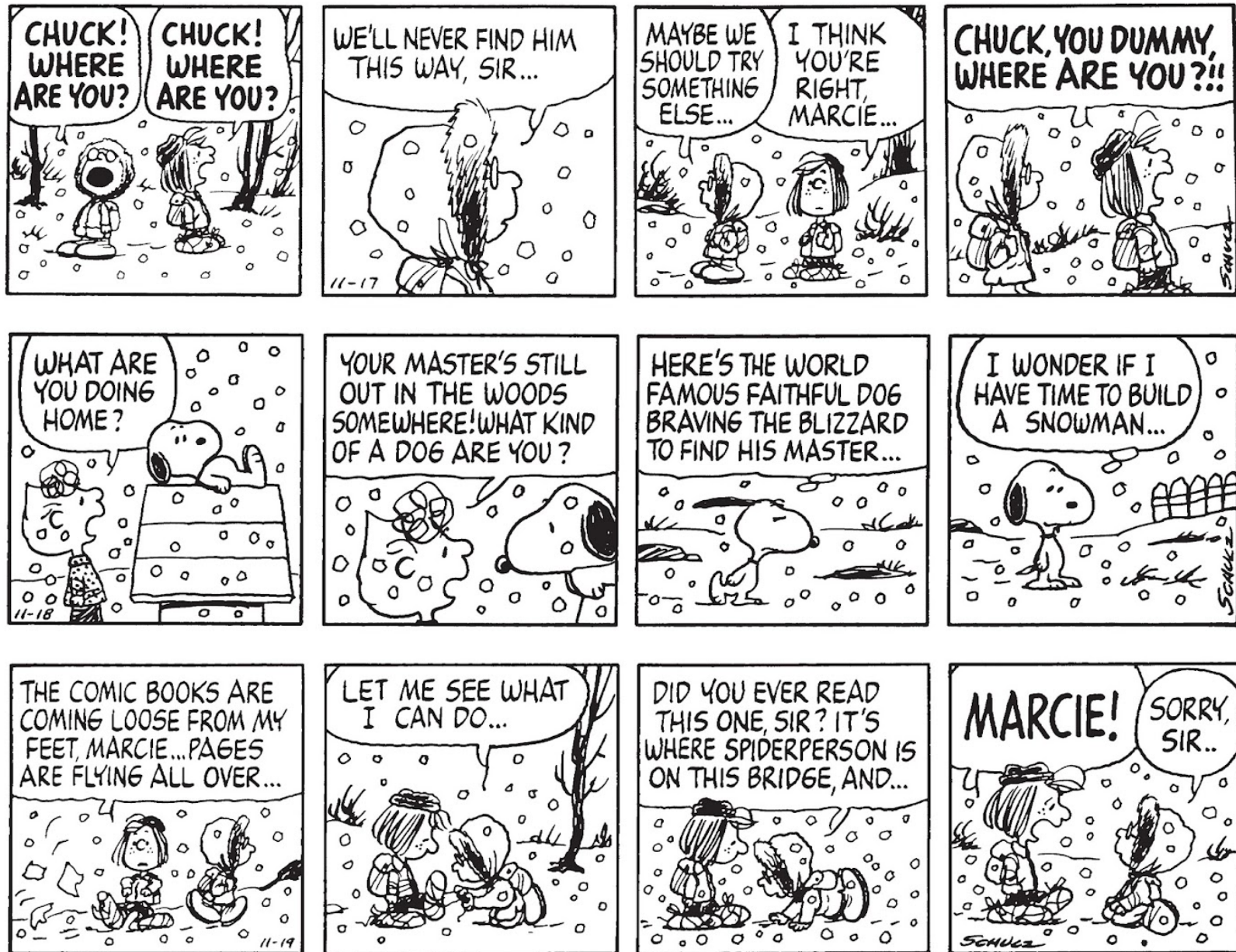




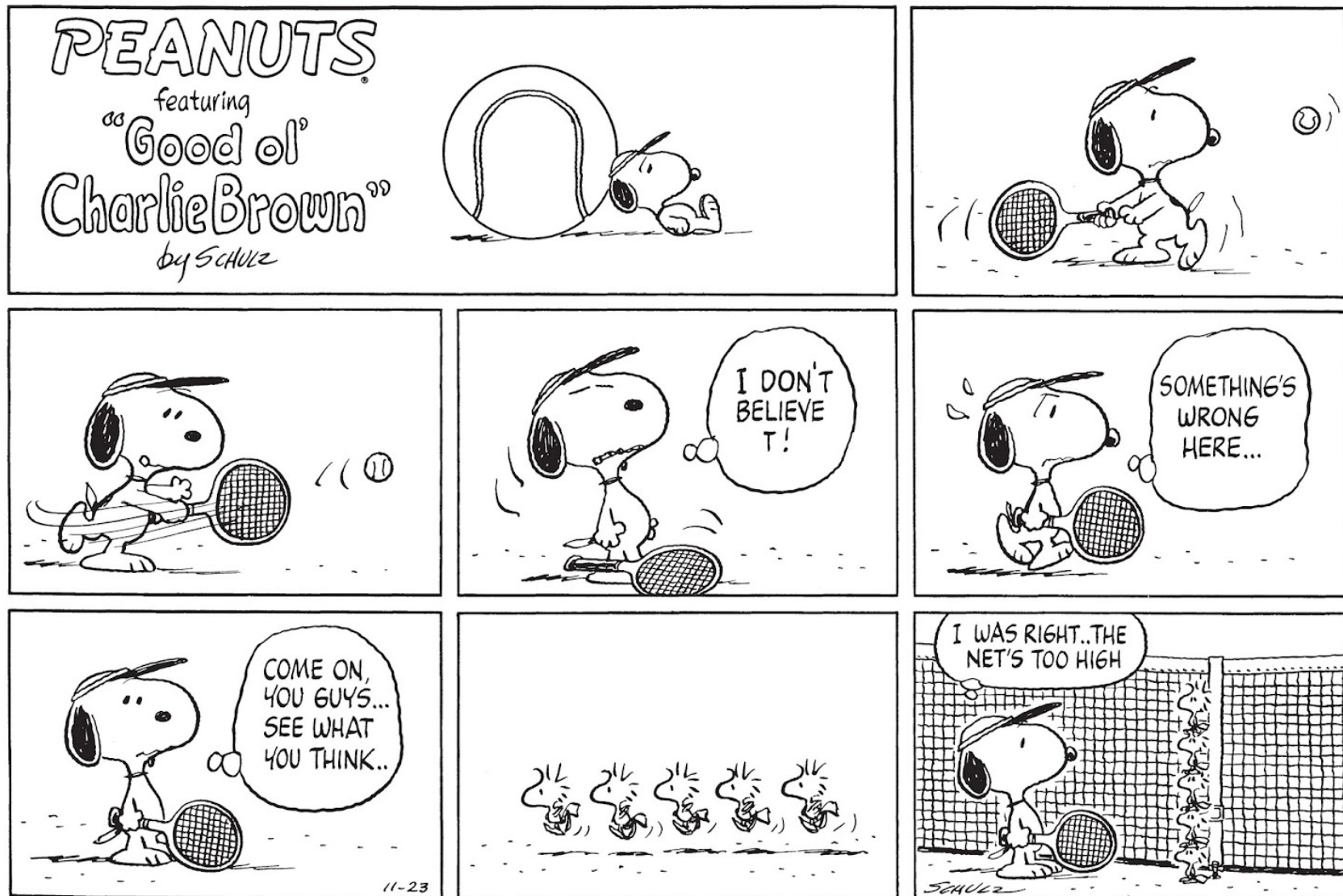






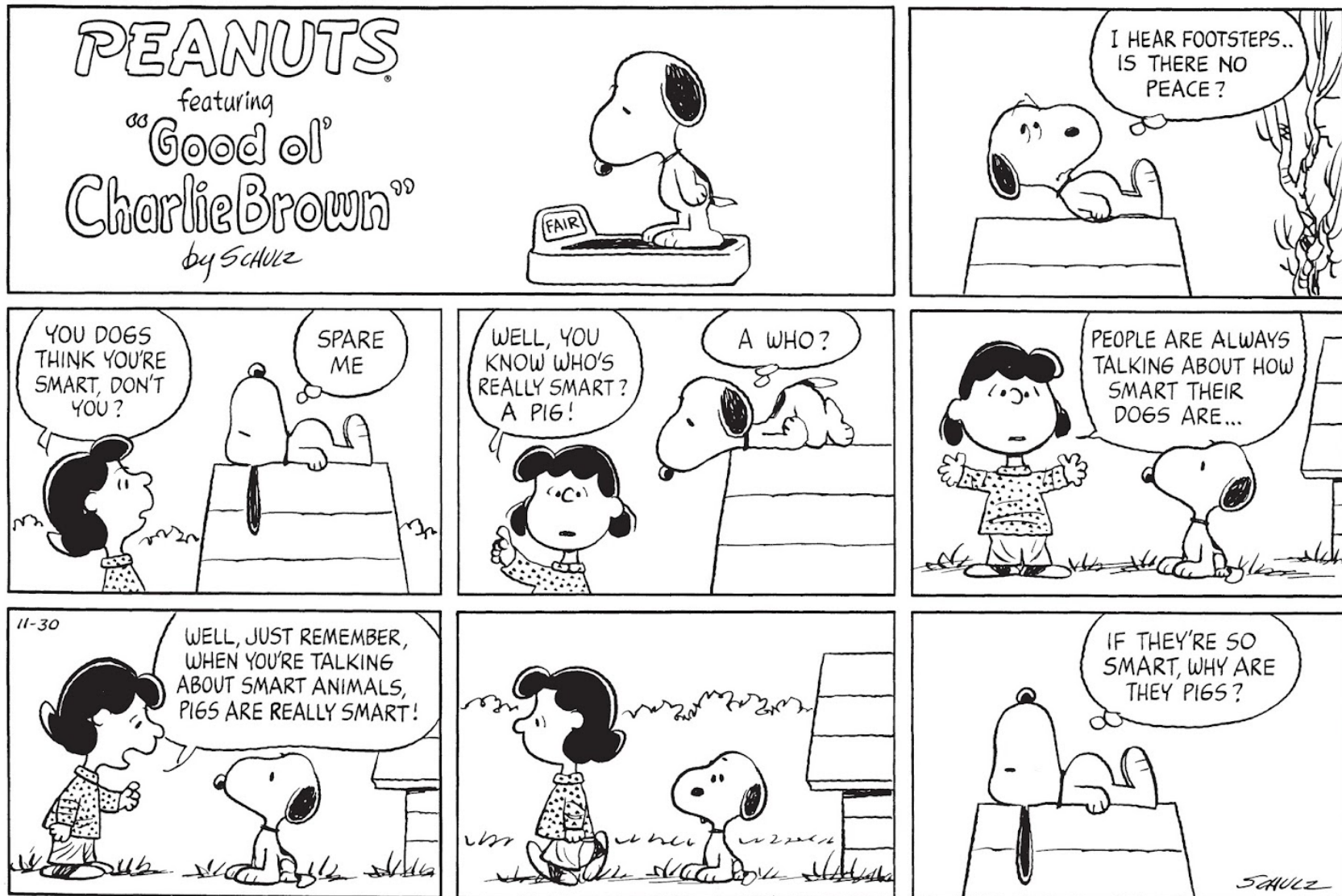


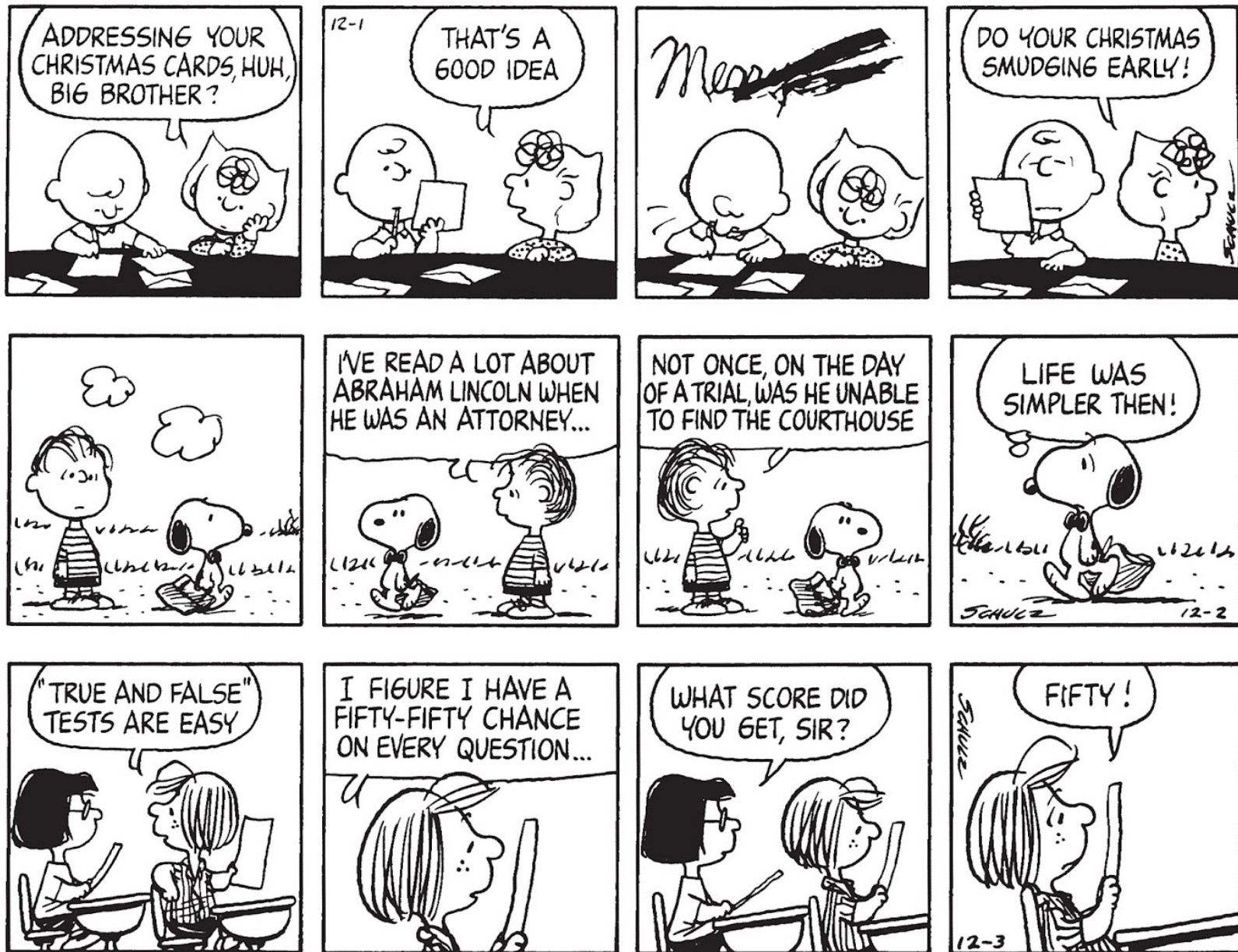


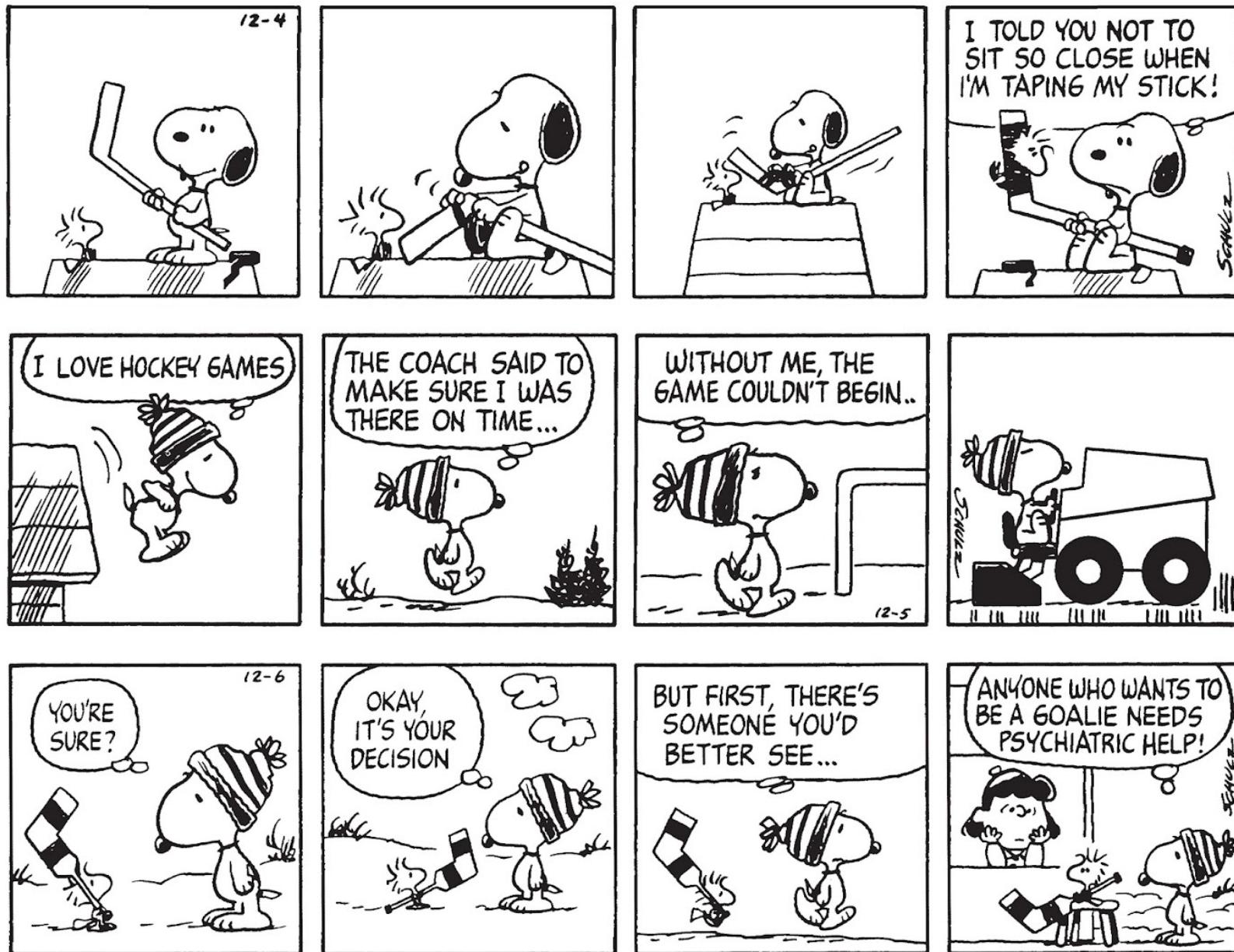


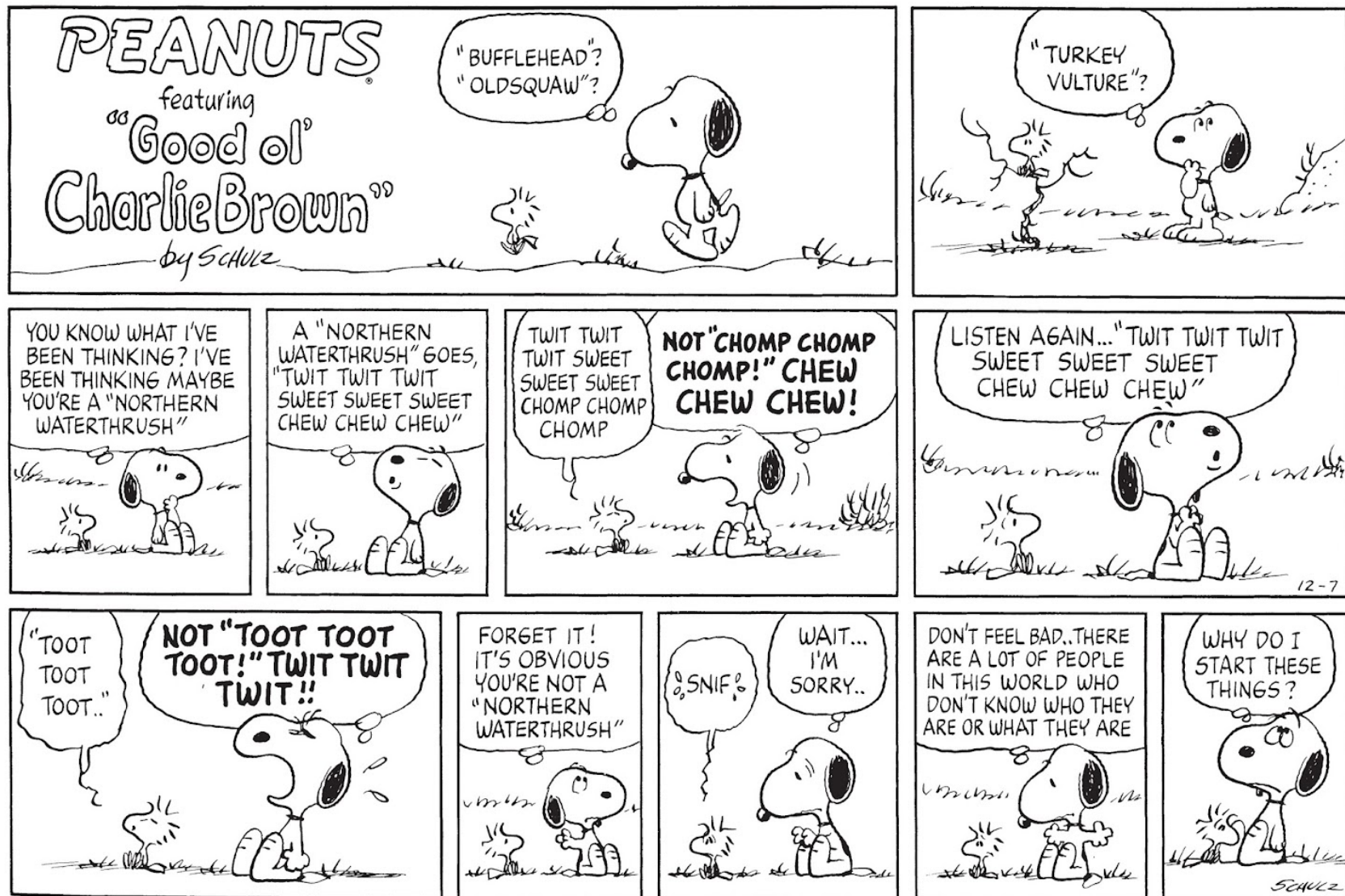






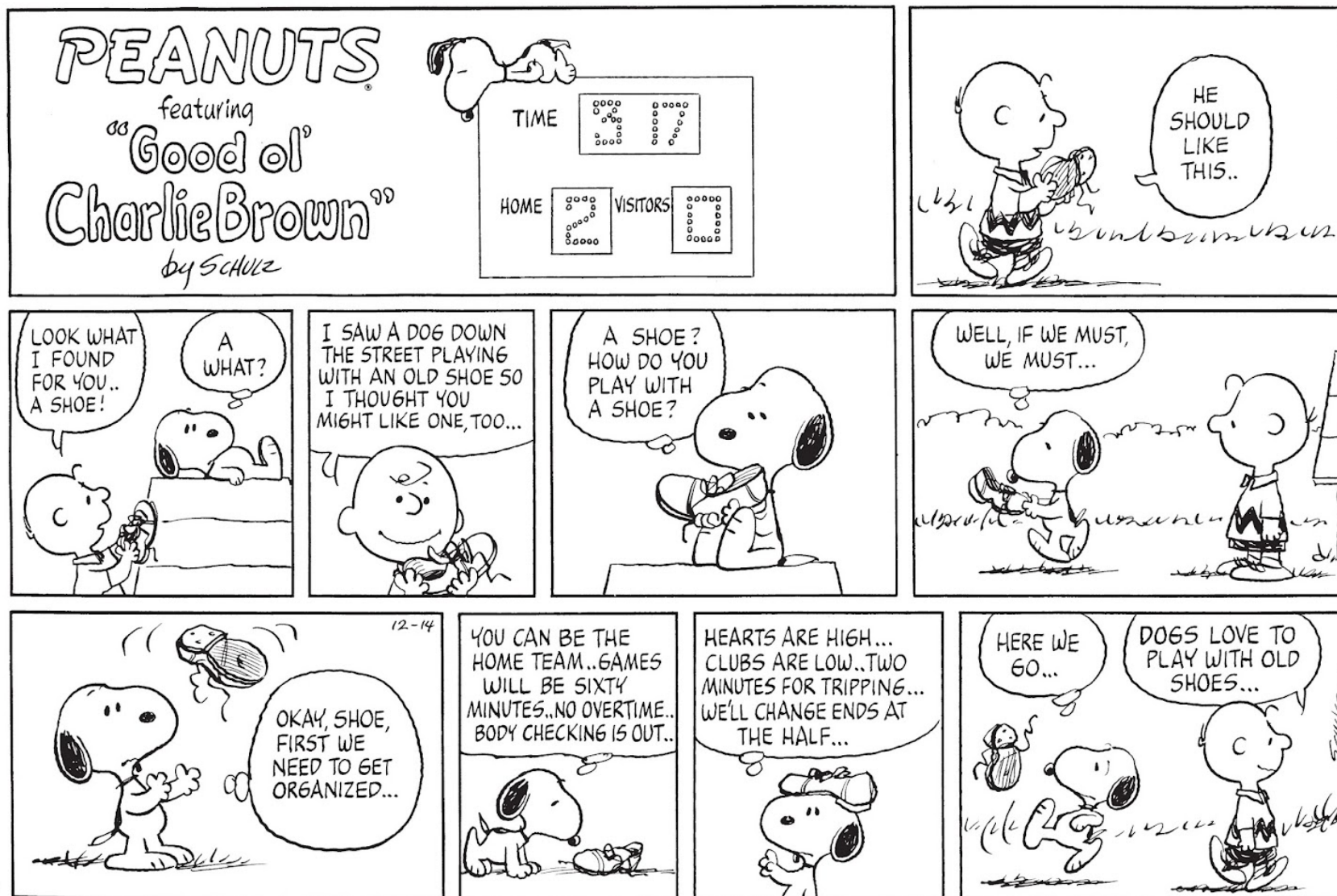








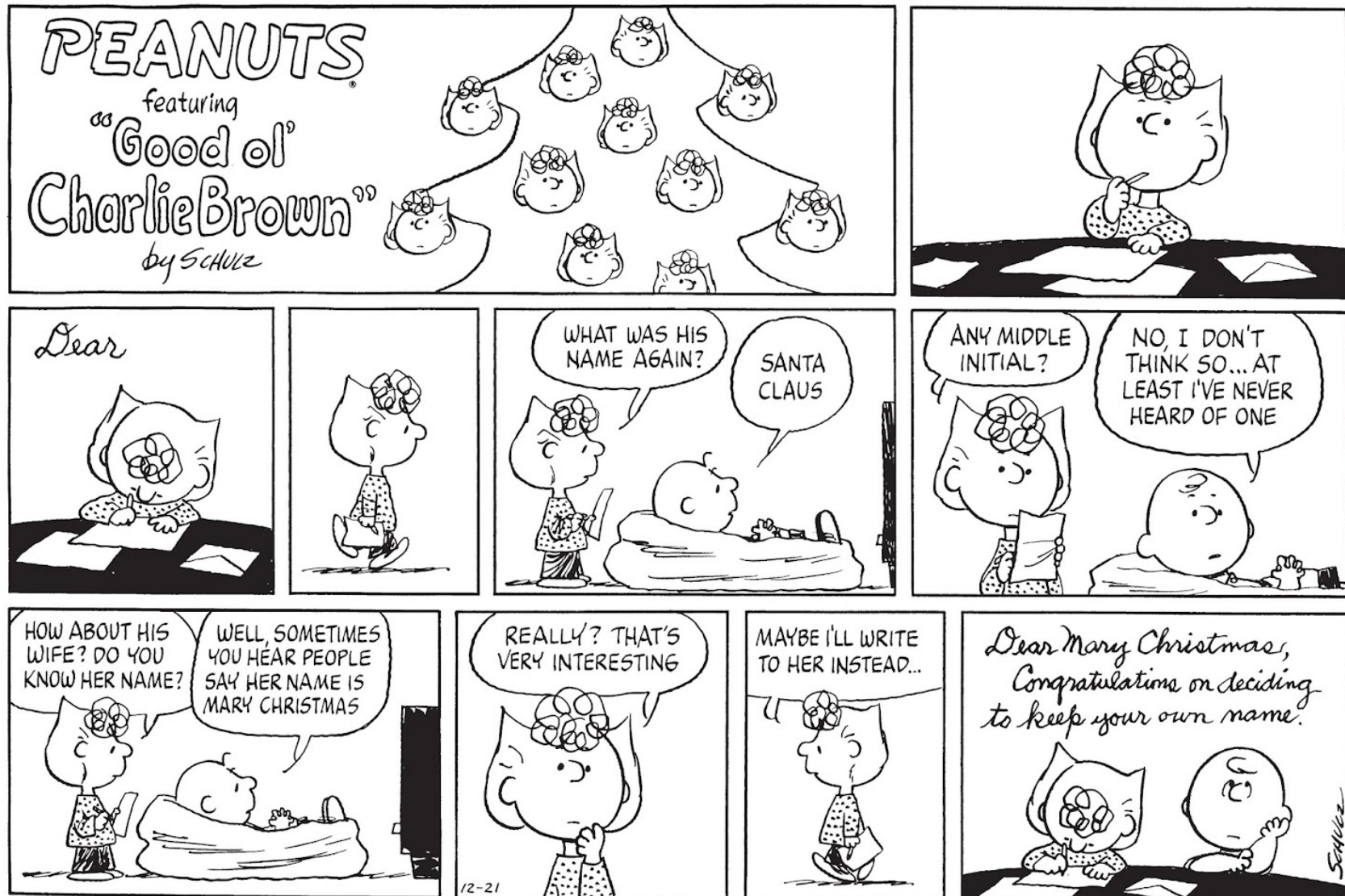




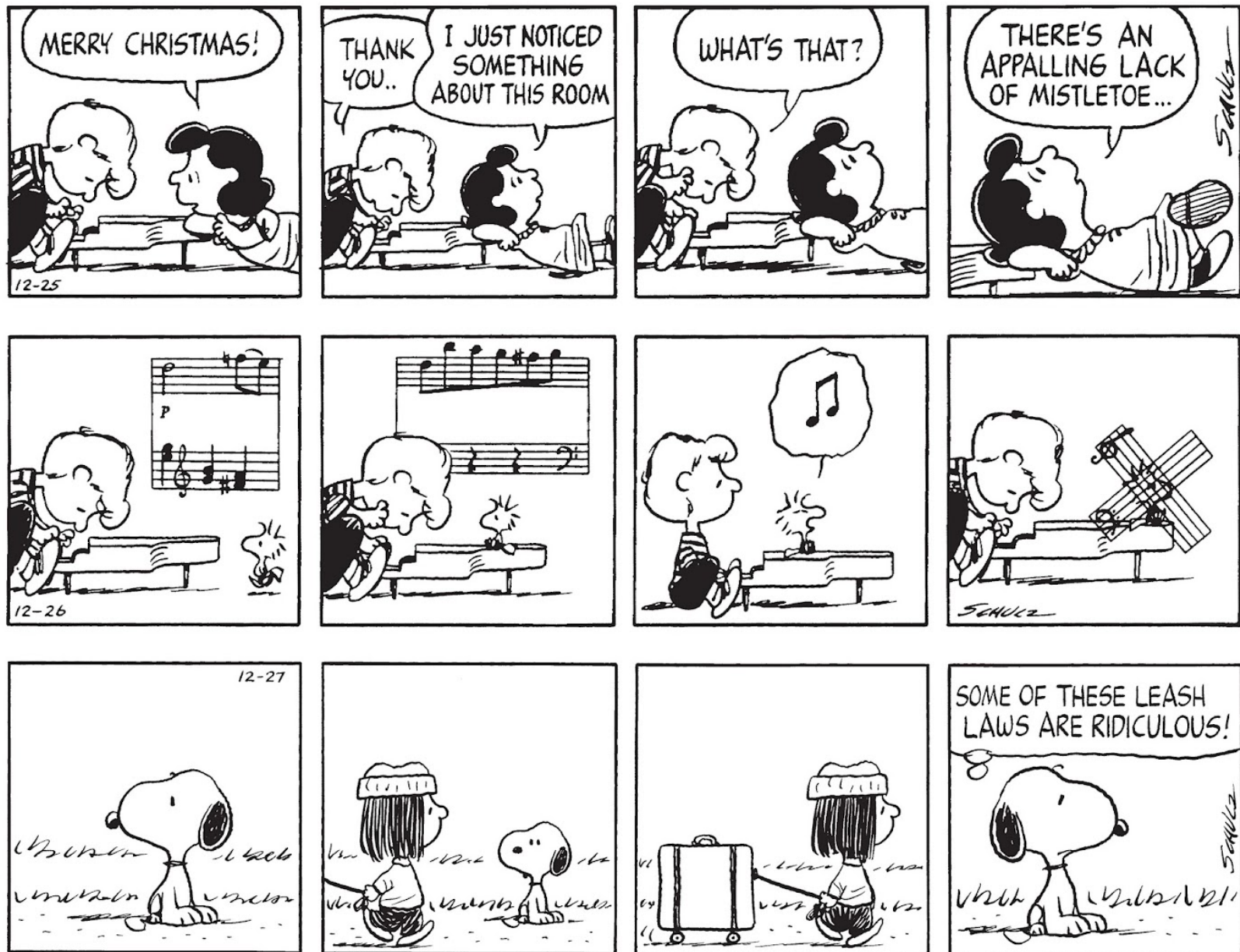
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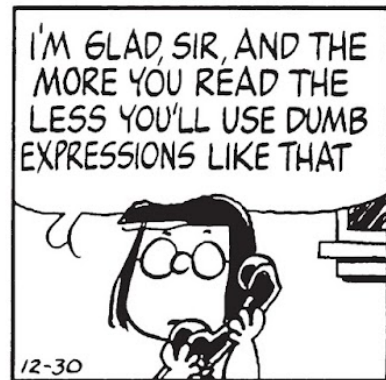






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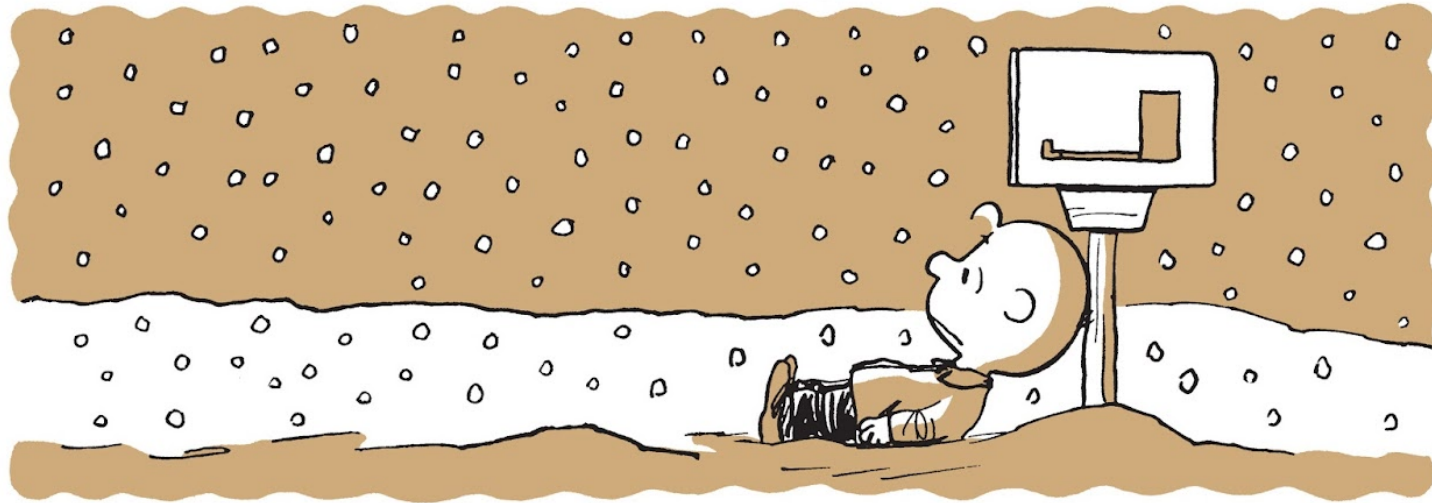
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CHARLES M. SCHULZ • 1922 to 2000

Charles M. Schulz was born November 26, 1922, in Minneapolis. His destiny was foreshadowed when an uncle gave him, at the age of two days, the nickname “Sparky” (after the racehorse Spark Plug in the newspaper strip *Barney Google*).

Schulz grew up in St. Paul. By all accounts, he led an unremarkable, albeit sheltered, childhood. He was an only child, close to both parents. His eventual career path was nurtured by his father, who bought four Sunday papers every week — just for the comics.

An outstanding student, he skipped two grades early on, but began to flounder in high school — perhaps not so coincidentally at the same time kids are going through their cruelest, most status-conscious

period of socialization. The pain, bitterness, insecurity, and failures chronicled in *Peanuts* appear to have originated from this period of Schulz’s life.

Although Schulz enjoyed sports, he also found refuge in solitary activities: reading, drawing, and watching movies. He bought comic books and Big Little Books, pored over the newspaper strips, and copied his favorites — *Buck Rogers*, the Walt Disney characters, *Popeye*, *Tim Tyler’s Luck*. He quickly became a connoisseur; his heroes were Milton Caniff, Roy Crane, Hal Foster, and Alex Raymond.

In his senior year in high school, his mother noticed an ad in a local newspaper for a correspondence school, Federal Schools (later called Art

Instruction Schools). Schulz passed the talent test, completed the course, and began trying, unsuccessfully, to sell gag cartoons to magazines. (His first published drawing was of his dog, Spike, and appeared in a 1937 *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* installment.)

After World War II had ended and Schulz was discharged from the army, he started submitting gag cartoons to the various magazines of the time; his first breakthrough, however, came when an editor at *Timeless Topix* hired him to letter adventure comics. Soon after that, he was hired by his alma mater, Art Instruction, to correct student lessons returned by mail.

Between 1948 and 1950, he succeeded in selling 17 cartoons to the *Saturday Evening Post* — as well as, to the local *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, a weekly comic feature called *Li'l Folks*. It ran in the women's section and paid \$10 a week. After writing and drawing the feature for two years, Schulz asked for a better location in the paper or for daily exposure, as well as a raise. When he was turned down on all three counts, he quit.

He started submitting strips to the newspaper syndicates. In the spring of 1950, he received a letter from the United Feature Syndicate, announcing its interest in his submission, *Li'l Folks*. Schulz boarded a train in June for New York City; more interested in doing a strip than a panel, he also brought along the first installments

of what would become *Peanuts* — and that was what sold. (The title, which Schulz loathed to his dying day, was imposed by the syndicate). The first *Peanuts* daily appeared October 2, 1950; the first Sunday, January 6, 1952.

Prior to *Peanuts*, the province of the comics page had been that of gags, social and political observation, domestic comedy, soap opera, and various adventure genres. Although *Peanuts* changed, or evolved, during the 50 years Schulz wrote and drew it, it remained, as it began, an anomaly on the comics page — a comic strip about the interior crises of the cartoonist himself. After a painful divorce in 1973 from which he had not yet recovered, Schulz told a reporter, “Strangely, I’ve drawn better cartoons in the last six months — or as good as I’ve ever drawn. I don’t know how the human mind works.” Surely, it was this kind of humility in the face of profoundly irreducible human questions that makes *Peanuts* as universally moving as it is.

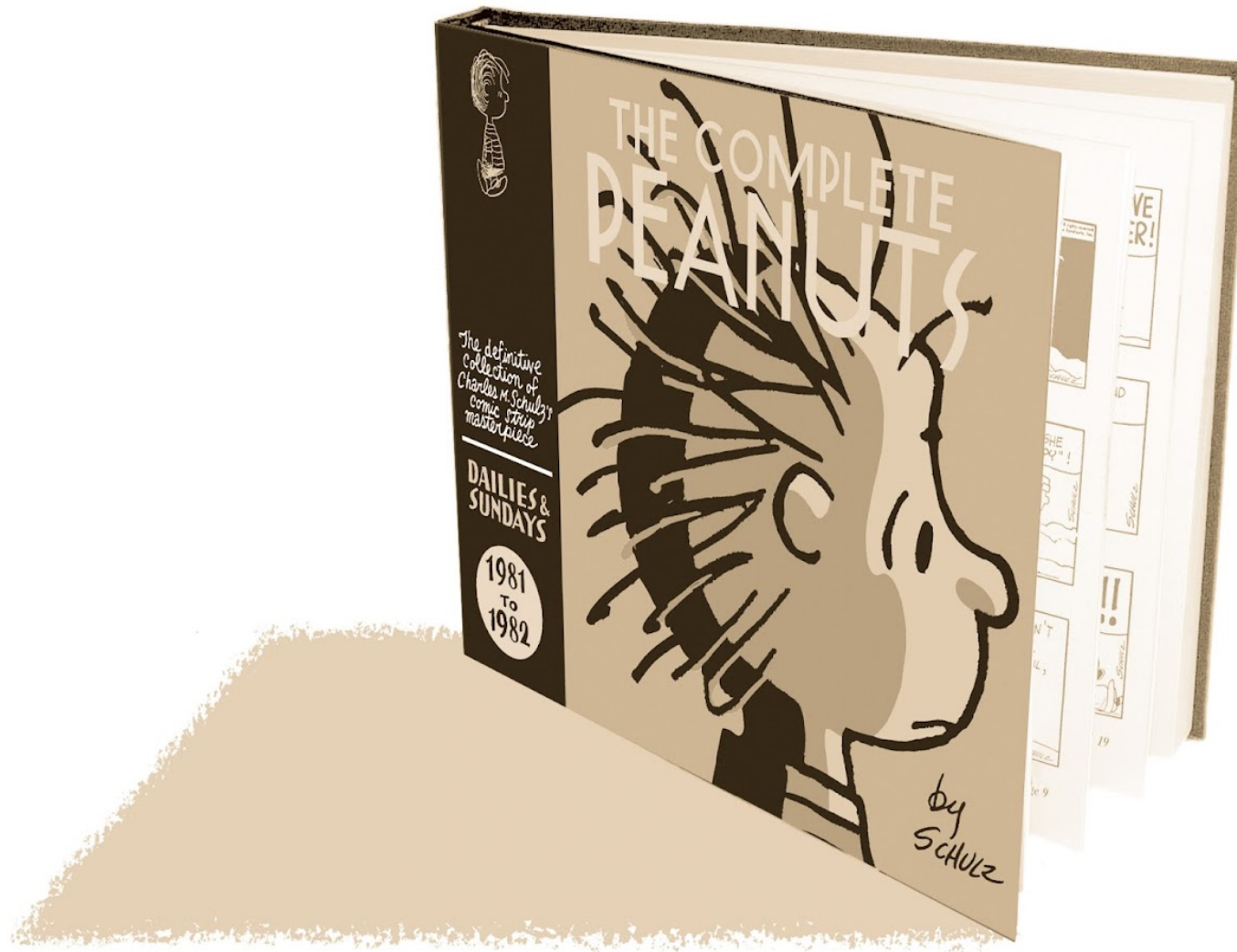
Diagnosed with cancer, Schulz retired from *Peanuts* at the end of 1999. He died on February 12, 2000, the day before his last strip was published

(and two days before Valentine’s Day), having completed 17,897 daily and Sunday strips, each and every one fully written, drawn, and lettered entirely by his own hand — an unmatched achievement in comics.

—Gary Groth







COMING IN *THE COMPLETE PEANUTS*: 1981-1982

Linus is not Sally's "Sweet Babboo"... Spike is drafted into the WWI infantry, and Marbles takes his bow... Charlie Brown joins Peppermint Patty's baseball team... Sally gets fat... Charlie Brown and his team lose their baseball field... Marcie caddies for Peppermint Patty... The Van Pelt's get into farming... Peppermint Patty and the "butterfly miracle"... And the return of Molly Volley and "Crybaby" Boobie.

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